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MSc(Econ) Strategic Studies

Strategic News Management in the Iraq War:

*How were US and UK media organisations
utilised by Coalition forces to instigate
information and psychological operations against
domestic audiences?*

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Declaration and Statements

The word length of this dissertation is 14,996

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the role of information strategy and its interaction with the media in modern information environments. In particular it investigates how military information operations utilised the media to protect Coalition strategic vulnerabilities and provide the basis for effective war-fighting in the 2003 Iraq War.

It investigates the role information plays in strategy, and its development into concepts of Information and Psychological Operations. In particular, military public communication methods are scrutinised, especially regarding the domestic use of psychological operations and military dedication to ‘truth-telling’. It is concluded that the military generally does communicate ‘truths’, but only ‘*selected truths*’ for target audiences, resulting in a manipulative relationship.

Following this the media-management policies prior to the Iraq War are examined. These are defined as a ‘restrictive model’ which limited the amount of information the media received. An examination of policies during the Iraq War illustrates that the military have moved beyond this model, towards the information saturation of the media. This information, however, was of a narrow nature which appealed to media imperatives. The military’s policies capitalised on these developments, providing information dominance and protecting public will.

Following this the legitimacy of this conduct by democratic nations is explored, arriving at the conclusion it is tolerated if utilised in popular wars, however this toleration depletes if public will is insufficient. This conclusion is linked to Clausewitz’s concepts of the trinity and maximum expenditure of effort in warfare.

To conclude, it is stated that the military attempted to instigate manipulative relationships with the media in order to affect domestic opinion. However, the media are partly responsible for this through their adoption of infotainment and commercial formats which prioritise spectacle over education. The military, with the aid of PR companies, understood these developments and set to control them with information overload, as opposed to information restriction. These measures are only successful however if the necessary public will has been generated through governmental justification.

Introduction

“The first casualty when war comes is truth.” - Hiram Johnson, 1917¹

Information has always been a valuable commodity in war; its control being of critical importance to commanders. The preservation of operational security was often a central reason for information control, however, contemporary debate highlights how ‘truth’ can diminish or corrupt national will, hindering strategy in war. In modern warfare, the truth is expected to be wounded somewhere on the battlefield of military-media interaction.

The media and military have a long, and often, contemptuous relationship. The media’s perceived role of ‘truth-telling’ is argued as incompatible with military priorities. For commanders the ‘truth’ is a dangerous concept which can kill troops and endanger campaigns.² Unrestricted media coverage of warfare has also been attributed to the decline of public support for operations. The Vietnam War has long been an example of this dynamic, with politicians and commanders blaming the media for sabotaging public support.³ This perception led commanders and administrations to implement stricter policies of media-management during conflict. The media are critical of such developments as it impedes their work, including their social responsibility to the people, as U.S Supreme Court Justice Black stated: “Paramount among the responsibilities of a free press is the duty to prevent any part of the government from deceiving the people and sending them off to distant lands to die of foreign fevers and foreign shot and shell”.⁴ The role of military-media-management is to

¹ Johnson, Hiram quoted in Knightly, Phillip, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker From the Crimea to Kosovo*, (London: Prion Books Limited, 2001) p. vii

² McFeely, MAJ. Eugene L. “The News Media: Keeping the Public Informed or Intelligence for the Enemy” *Joint Military Operations Department, Naval War College*, (February 2004) p. ii

³ Carruthers, Susan L, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000) p. 145

⁴ Black, Hugo quoted in Aday, Sean, Hebert, Maeve and Livingston, Steven, “Embedding the Truth: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Objectivity and Television Coverage of the Iraq War” *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Winter 2005) p. 3

navigate the path between providing information to satisfy the media, whilst preserving operational security and public support.⁵

This dissertation will investigate this issue in relation to the 2003 Iraq War. This conflict has been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it was a conflict which engendered global controversy, resulting in the ‘truth’ becoming central to debates.⁶ Secondly, it was the first major conflict of a matured ‘information age’, which features internet use, 24-hour news channels and an international news environment.⁷ Thirdly, the war featured the embedding of 570 to 750 journalists into front-line military units.⁸ This development attracted some controversy, particularly from journalists who feared such relationships would impact upon journalistic integrity.⁹

This study investigates how the media were utilised by the military within informational strategy. Furthermore, it will question whether the media became co-opted into psychological operations aimed against Coalition domestic audiences. To investigate this, a range of sources were consulted, often originating from journalists and military personnel. Caution was adopted when utilising such sources, since, as Taylor and Moorcraft note: “Nobody is more interested in the media than the media themselves.”¹⁰ This combined with the history of antagonism between the military and media, meant certain, especially critical journalists, such as John Pilger, were inclined to see deliberate government deception in any instance of misreporting or information ambiguity. Such instances could have resulted from ‘fog of war’ or institutional differences and misunderstandings between the military and media. Generally,

⁵ McFeely, “The News Media” p. 3

⁶ Moorcraft, Paul L. & Taylor, Phillip M. *Shooting the Messenger: The Political Impact of War Reporting*, (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books Inc. 2008) p. 182

⁷ Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Embedded Reporters: What Are Americans Getting?” <http://www.journalism.org/node/211> (accessed 5/4/2012)

⁸ Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, “The Vanishing Embedded Reporter in Iraq” <http://www.journalism.org/node/2596> (accessed 5/4/2012)

⁹ Aday, et al, “Embedding the Truth” p. 4

¹⁰ Moorcraft & Taylor, *Shooting the Messenger*, p. 217

a level of care was adopted when dealing with media sources commenting on military and strategic issues they may not be qualified to accurately comment upon. The same was also applied to military sources commenting on media activities in warfare. Military writers appeared to hold different understandings of issues, including objectivity and the public's 'right to know', as the media. The military often understood these issues in an operational sense compared to more normative appreciations by the media.

This dissertation will concern itself with media-management *during* the invasion phase of the Iraq War. Television news coverage from US and British channels will be prioritised, although print media is referred to. Television became the main source of news for the public, as well being the medium arguably most affected by embedding.¹¹ The dissertation will be arranged as follows:

- Chapter 1 will investigate the role of information operations in strategy, particularly in post-industrial conflicts. It will further discuss the roles of Psychological Operations, Public Affairs and Public Relations within military-media interaction.
- Chapter 2 will investigate the development of military media-management policies, following Vietnam and up-to-and-including the Iraq War. Particular events will be examined to illustrate how they fit into these operations.
- Chapter 3 will discuss the implications of these developments of information strategy, particularly whether the West can/should legitimately utilise propaganda.

To conclude, this dissertation will state that the Coalition's, especially the US's, media-management strategy differed greatly from previous programmes. Far from excluding the media, it is argued that the Iraq War allowed for the saturation of the media with information, much of which was of a narrow, but exciting nature. Essentially, the media was allowed to

¹¹ Thussu, Daya Kishan, "Live TV and Bloodless Deaths: War, Infotainment and 24/7 News" in Freedman, Des and Thussu, Daya Kishan, (ed.) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, (London: SAGE, 2003) p. 188

engorge itself with imagery of great detail but little strategic context. Such information was less likely to adversely affect public opinion, but instead appealed to networks' commercial imperatives while promoting war as entertainment. This dynamic allowed the military to divert attention from controversies regarding the war's justification towards 'conflict spectation' which engendered and promoted jingoistic narratives. However, such techniques are only effective if preceding government information campaigns have provided solid justification for the conflict.

Chapter 1: Information Operations and Strategy

“There are two powers in the world, the sword and the mind. In the long run the sword will always be beaten by the mind.” – Napoleon¹²

The Role of Information and Public Opinion in Strategy

The use of information in warfare is as old as warfare itself, indeed every use of force results in ‘information’ that impacts upon all belligerents. Sun Tzu’s, *The Art of War*, stresses the importance of information and psychology, stating: “All warfare is based on deception,”¹³ “Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril,”¹⁴ and, “To win a hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”¹⁵ Furthermore, Sun Tzu places the use of information above kinetic force, stating that: “What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy... Next best is to disrupt his alliances... The next best is to attack his army... The worst policy is to attack cities.”¹⁶ The attacking of strategy and alliances does not necessarily require force, but can be accomplished through the use of deception and manipulation – notions related to informational warfare.

Within modern conflict, however, commanders do not hold informational monopolies. This is related the communication of politics in modern conflicts, for, as Clausewitz stated: “War is

¹² Bonaparte, Napoleon quoted in Taylor, Phillip M, “The Fourth Arm and the Fourth Estate: Psychological Operations and the Media” in Connelly, Mark & Welch, David, *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005) p. 252

¹³ Sun Tzu, trans. Griffith, Samuel B, *The Art of War*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 66

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 84

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 77

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 77/78

the mere continuation of policy by other means”.¹⁷ Policy, and therefore war, is now increasingly communicated via the media.¹⁸ As Brown states:

“Media coverage has effects not simply on ‘the audience’ understood as a set of passive bystanders, but on those actually and potentially involved in the conflict. Shaping the perceptions of opponents, supporters and neutral groups influences whether they will become involved and how they will participate.”¹⁹

Western commanders, wishing to control information, must increasingly compete with the media who are the main informational medium.²⁰ This is particularly important in relation to issues of public support for conflicts, as Western societies require public support for successful war-fighting. Commanders have long acknowledged this requirement, General Eisenhower stated: “Fundamentally, public opinion wins wars”, while earlier Napoleon, claimed: “Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.”²¹ Democracies conduct war at the behest of governments supported by the people. Politicians are therefore reactive to public opinion, which in turn impacts upon strategy. For example, during the Falklands War, interdiction of Argentinian aircraft in Argentina made military sense, but was not conducted. Furthermore, during the NATO campaign in Kosovo, bombing was restricted to above 15,000 feet. These decisions did not result purely from military thinking but rather attempts to maintain public support.²² Regarding the Falklands War, the extension of warfare to Argentina would have been harder to justify to domestic and global

¹⁷ von Clausewitz, Carl, trans. Howard, Michael & Peret, Peter, *On War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) p. 87

¹⁸ Brown, Robin, “Spinning the War: Political Communications, Information Operations and Public Diplomacy in the War on Terrorism” in Freedman, Des and Thussu, Daya Kishan, (ed.) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, (London: SAGE, 2003) p. 87

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 88

²¹ Eisenhower, Dwight D and Bonaparte, Napoleon quoted in Taverner, LT COL. Angus, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century: The Evolution in British Military Attitude to the Media on Operations and in War” in Connelly, Mark & Welch, David, *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005) p. 266

²² Ibid.

opinion, while, in Kosovo, bombing below 15,000 feet placed air crews into range of anti-aircraft batteries. The loss of NATO personnel could have major domestic ramifications in NATO nations, where intervention was not universally popular. Public support is therefore central to the maintenance and efficiency of war-fighting, Clausewitz recognised this dynamic in developing his 'trinity of warfare', consisting of three interrelated and supportive forces, commonly defined 'army, state and people'. For successful war Clausewitz stated the "passions to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people", as such he is articulating the importance of public support or 'passion' in war. A strategy which ignores any one of these elements will be "totally useless".²³

The use of information by the media and military results in the construction of 'Idea Battlespaces' which are separate, but related to, 'Kinetic Battlespaces'. Within 'Idea Battlespaces' messages compete for dominance; those which receive the most attention and belief from target groups dominate.²⁴ For example, a commander wishing to elicit surrender of troops may communicate messages such as "continue to fight and you will be killed", this will compete against the enemy's messages to their troops such as "continue to fight and we will be victorious." 'Surrender' messages could be communicated through leaflet drops, loudspeakers or other mediums. However, kinetic force also generates messages - killing large amounts of the enemy clearly communicates the "continue fighting and you'll be killed" message.²⁵ This combination can result in information acting as a powerful force multiplier. The Idea Battlespace does not just apply to theatre operations. Domestic populations will also receive competing messages, often communicated via the media.²⁶ To be successful commanders are increasingly required to manage the media output, as Laity explains: "In an

²³ Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 89.

²⁴ Allen, Patrick D. *Information Operations Planning*, (Boston: Artech House, 2007), p. 114

²⁵ Ibid. 115

²⁶ Laity, Mark, "Straddling the Divide - Spinning for Both Sides" in Connelly, Mark & Welch, David, *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005) p. 275

uncertain age of highly conditional half-victories, harnessing the power of the media is now a prime factor in who wins.”²⁷

Since the early 1990s Britain and the US have become increasingly receptive to informational warfare concepts. This adoption is relatable to broader developments in strategy resulting from experiences in the Gulf War and emerging concepts of a ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’.²⁸

This led to the rise of military doctrine referred to as Information Operations (IO). This is defined by Joint Publication 3-13 as actions which “influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own.”²⁹ The elements of IO have engendered debate between branches of the military, however often it is seen as involving: “psychological operations, operations security, public affairs, electronic warfare, military deception, and others.”³⁰ Furthermore, IO is incorporated into US strategic thinking as part of ‘Effect-Based Operations’ (EBO), which is defined as “actions... designed to achieve specific effects that contribute directly to desired military and political outcomes.”³¹ EBO involves the employment of all instruments of national power - ‘diplomatic, informational, military and economy’ - against opposing ‘political, military, economic, social, information and infrastructure’ capabilities.³² These concepts illustrate an appreciation of the changing nature of warfare, and the importance of information, within the US military. Arkin stated: “Rumsfeld and his senior aides are revisiting missions and creating new agencies to

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Webster, Frank, “Information Warfare in an Age of Globalization” in Freedman, Des and Thussu, Daya Kishan, (ed.) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, (London: SAGE, 2003) p. 62

²⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Publication 3-13: Information Operations” (Washington D.C.: The Joint Staff, 2006) p. GL-9

³⁰ Elstad, MAJ. Peter L, “Overcoming Information Operations Legal Limitations in Support of Domestic Operations” *U.S. Army Command and General Staff College*, (2008) p. 1

³¹ Negron, COL Jose, “Analyzing Effects-Based Operations” white paper (Langley Air Force Base, VA: Air Combat Command, 2002)

³² Allen, *Information Operations Planning*, pp. 18/19

make ‘information warfare’ a central element of any US war.”³³ Indeed Victoria Clarke, who was responsible for the Pentagon public affairs during the Iraq War, claims to have been involved in strategic planning from the start.³⁴

The post-industrial nature of warfare also increases the importance of information. Industrial war traditionally concerned territory between industrialised states and involved the mass-mobilisation of populations and state infrastructure and information control.³⁵ Modern warfare, however, is increasingly characterised as ‘information warfare’ consisting of smaller, professional armies comprising ‘knowledge warriors’ utilising advanced equipment. As such civilian participation, in the West, is relegated to the fringes of war effort.³⁶ Furthermore, conflicts are often short and asymmetrical, with Western forces employing superior firepower and command.³⁷ Preservation of public support plays a central role in these conflicts. Within industrial ‘total war’ public support is often assumed as national survival is at stake, however, in post-industrial ‘wars of choice’, where Western populations are not directly threatened, public support must be maintained. This is achieved through providing solid justification, as well as limiting operations to what is perceived as just and proportionate.³⁸ Darley claims that as conflicts move away from the Clausewitzian concept of ‘total war’ they more clearly represent ‘pure politics’ and as such IO and non-kinetic options will become increasing important (figure 1).³⁹

³³ Arkin, William summarised by Miller, Laura, Stauber, John and Rampton, Sheldon, “War is Sell” in Miller, David (ed.) *Tell me lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004) p. 46

³⁴ Brookes, Rod, Lewis, Justin, Mosdell, Nick & Threadgold, Terry *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later: Media Coverage of the 2003 Iraq War*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2006) pp. 39/40

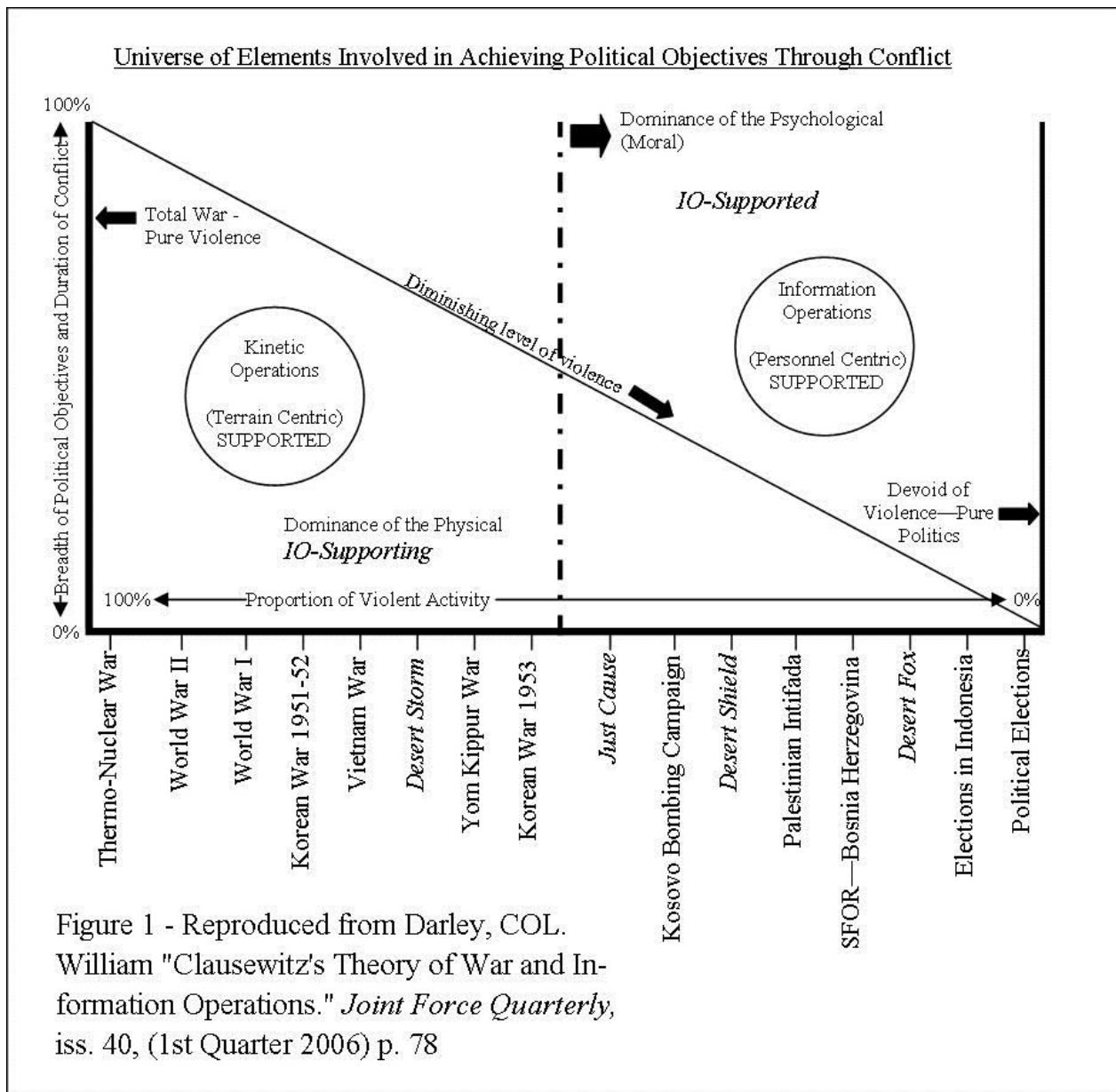
³⁵ Webster, “Information Warfare in an Age of Globalization” pp. 61/62

³⁶ Ibid. p. 62

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 62/63

³⁸ Taverner, LT COL, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century” p. 267

³⁹ Darley, COL. William “Clausewitz’s Theory of War and Information Operations.” *Joint Force Quarterly*, iss. 40, (1st Quarter 2006) p. 78



The importance of public opinion in post-industrial conflict means it can be considered a 'centre of gravity' (COG) of Western war-machines. Clausewitz stated:

"... one must keep the dominant characteristics of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain centre of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 595/596

Therefore, a COG could be considered the critical spot of belligerents' war machines.

Traditionally, a COG could be a city, army or commander; however, increasingly for the West public opinion is central to strategy, as US Joint Operations doctrine explains:

“National will can also be a COG, as it was for the United States during the Vietnam and Persian Gulf Wars.”⁴¹ The US military appeared to recognise this development prior to the Iraq War, with Stahl stating that Rumsfeld in 2002 advocated moving away from “threat-based” models concerned with external adversaries to “capabilities-based” models examining weaknesses within the US military.⁴² The media could have been recognised as a ‘weakness’ within the structure, therefore generating the media-management policies of the Iraq War.

The media is particularly important as it can turn the ‘tactical’ into the ‘strategic’. This phenomenon has been referred to as ‘the Strategic Corporal’ and states that activity which occurs at the lower levels of command, once reported by the media, can go on to have major strategic and political consequences.⁴³ Examples include the bombing of the Basra Road during *Desert Storm*. The attack of retreating Iraqi forces, although making tactical military sense, was controversial due to its media framing as a massacre.⁴⁴ This highlights the limitations the military faces due to public pressure. The attack was in military terms a ‘no-brainer’ as retreating forces can regroup, indeed the attack was similar to Allied bombing of retreating German forces at Falaise in 1944.⁴⁵ Whereas in total war this was tolerated by the public, they were unwilling to do so in limited conflict, as Colin Powell stated afterwards: “The television coverage... was starting to make it look as if we were engaged in slaughter for slaughter’s sake...”⁴⁶ There are examples of the ‘Strategic Corporal’ during the Iraq War and

⁴¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Publication 3-0: Doctrine for Joint Operations” (Washington D.C.: The Joint Staff, 2001) p. III-23

⁴² Stahl, Roger, *Militainment, Inc: War, Media and Popular Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2010) p. 36

⁴³ Taverner, LT COL, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century” p. 270

⁴⁴ Laity, “Straddling the Divide - Spinning for Both Sides” p. 278

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 279

its aftermath, such as the Abu Ghraib scandal, fall of the Firdos Square Statue and friendly fire incidents.⁴⁷ Even a single casualty can have strategic consequences, as Laity explains: “...if a grieving relative condemns the conflict on the front page of a tabloid, in media terms there is nothing that can be done.”⁴⁸ This has resulted in politicians and commanders becoming involved in lower levels of military activity, as well as increasing the requirement for media-management.⁴⁹ This is especially true as commanders realise the advantages the ‘Strategic Corporal’ gives to asymmetrical fighters, such as insurgents, who traditionally could not operate at strategic levels.⁵⁰

The US, prior to the Iraq War, appeared to recognise this trend. IO plays a central role in their concept of ‘Full Spectrum Dominance’ developed in 2000.⁵¹ This doctrine advocates the combined use of all forces to allow domination of space, sea, land, air and information.⁵² Information dominance is defined as having two goals: “building up and protecting friendly information” and “degrading information received by your adversary”⁵³ To achieve this dominance, it is argued that the US must manage, or perhaps, manipulate information and the news media to generate favourable narratives.⁵⁴ This is the responsibility of Influence Operations, a subsection of IO, which primarily consists of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Public Affairs (PA).⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Allen, *Information Operations Planning*, p. 13

⁴⁸ Laity, “Straddling the Divide - Spinning for Both Sides” pp. 282/283

⁴⁹ Taverner, LT COL, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century” p. 270

⁵⁰ Garrison, COL. W.C. “Information Operations and Counter-Propaganda: Making a Weapon of Public Affairs” *Army War College, Carlisle Barracks PA*, (March 1999) p. 2

⁵¹ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc*, p. 36

⁵² Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 18/19

⁵³ Giffin, John & Winters, Jim “Information Dominance Point Paper”

<http://www.iwar.org.uk/iwar/resources/info-dominance/id.htm> (accessed 05/09/2012)

⁵⁴ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 20

⁵⁵ Allen, *Information Operations Planning*, p. 109

Psychological Operations and Public Affairs

PSYOP has a long history, tracing back to British leaflet dropping in World War I.⁵⁶ By World War II, the US began to develop this new 'fourth fighting arm', instigating the Psychological Warfare Branch. The responsibility of this division was primarily tactical and involved "the dissemination of propaganda designed to undermine the enemy's will to resist, demoralise his forces and sustain the morale of our supporters."⁵⁷ Lord, writing in 1989, identified that PSYOP had been hindered by the inability of commanders to elevate it to strategic levels,⁵⁸ in addition to its reputation and association with 'black' activities, such as deceit.⁵⁹ However, the media also has a long relationship with PSYOP; its activities often imitate media methods, while during total war the media often assisted it.⁶⁰ Indeed, newspaper proprietor Lord Northcliffe was instrumental in establishing the 'Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries' following WWI.⁶¹ However, with the demise of total war this relationship soured. Furthermore, PSYOP has been accused of being directed against domestic audiences, blurring its distinction with PA, which is tasked with communicating *truthfully* with home audiences.⁶²

'Information warriors' often stress the differences between PSYOP and PA.⁶³ Firstly, PSYOP is often defined as something which happens on, or around, the battlefield, and is more a tactical force multiplier than strategic tool. However, PSYOP has played a role in communicating on a strategic level, especially during the Cold War, with instruments such as

⁵⁶ Taylor, Phillip "The Fourth Arm and the Fourth Estate" p. 252

⁵⁷ Paddock Jr, Alfred H, "Military Psychological Operations" in Barnett, Frank R & Lord, Carnes (ed.) *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the US Approach*, (Washington DC: National Defense University Press in cooperation with National Strategy Information Centre, 1989) p. 46

⁵⁸ Lord, Carnes "The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy" in Barnett, Frank R & Lord, Carnes (ed.) *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the US Approach*, (Washington DC: National Defense University Press in cooperation with National Strategy Information Centre, 1989) p. 28

⁵⁹ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 20

⁶⁰ Taylor, "The Fourth Arm and the Fourth Estate" p. 255

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 252

⁶² Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 17

⁶³ Ibid. 34

Radio Free Europe.⁶⁴ A second difference is that PA is not supposed to intentionally deceive, 'but is restricted to telling the truth as best as it is known at any given time.'⁶⁵ PSYOP is under no such restrictions and, occasionally, deceiving foreign troops and civilians is its objective.⁶⁶ Truth-telling is stated as central to successful PA, doctrine states: "[the] goal of any Public Affairs staff is to support an operational commander in achieving a constant flow of complete, accurate and timely information about the mission and U.S. forces."⁶⁷ Truth-telling is essential as it maintains the credibility of the military, while the speedy release of accurate information also provides information initiative. If the media discovered PA officials were spreading false information it would compromise their credibility allowing enemy information to dominate in the Idea Battlespace.⁶⁸ Therefore, PSYOP and PA can be defined as 'offence' and 'defence'.⁶⁹ PSYOP's objective is to 'push' audiences towards desired behaviour, potentially through the use of deception, while PA 'pulls' audiences by countering enemy disinformation with truth.⁷⁰ Rid also argues distinct organisational differences exist between PA and PSYOP, with officers following different training and career paths in separate organisations.⁷¹ Furthermore, there are contrasting mindsets between the functions. PA officers, Rid claims, "...tend to be proud and idealistic patriots who would like the greatness, the merits, and the dedication of their service's troops to be reported in the national media", while IO, including PSYOP, officers tend "...mostly to think pragmatically in a warrior's mindset, willing to use the media as a means to put psychological pressure on the

⁶⁴ Lord, Carnes "The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy" p. 19

⁶⁵ Allen, *Information Operations Planning*, p. 111

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, "Field Manual 3-61.1: Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques and Procedures" http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/fm3_61x1.pdf (accessed 23/6/2012) p. 4-2

⁶⁸ Rid, Thomas, *War and Media Operations*, (London; Routledge, 2007) pp. 122/123

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 115

⁷⁰ Global Focus, "Information Operations & Psychological Operations in Iraq"

⁷¹ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 115

adversary or to deceive him.”⁷² Indeed, PA doctrine states: “Under no circumstances will public affairs personnel engage in PSYOP activities.”⁷³

A major legal difference is that PSYOP cannot be used domestically, but only against foreign populations. This is provided by the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 which established the “preparation, and dissemination abroad, of information about the United States, its people, and its policies, through press, publications, radio, motion pictures, and other information media.” It continues: “*any such information shall not be disseminated within the United States.*”⁷⁴

However, there is debate concerning how pronounced these differences are. Although PSYOP and PA should remain separate they still operate under the purview of ‘Influence Operations’. Operations between IO elements are often coordinated into wider campaigns, blurring boundaries.⁷⁵ Rid argues that many information warriors view PA as an element of IO and a weapon of war, despite attempts by PA to distance itself from PSYOP.⁷⁶ However, PA doctrine recognises that “Information campaign objectives cannot be neatly divided by discipline, such as PA, CA [civil affairs] and PSYOP. The responsible organization cannot be easily determined solely by looking at the medium, the message or the audience.”⁷⁷ This difficulty in role definition is evident in both military and academic defining of these elements. For example Rid uses the revised Joint Pub 3-13 definition stated above⁷⁸ which suggests IO can be responsible for deception.⁷⁹ However, Global Focus.org state that “IO

⁷² Ibid. p. 116

⁷³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Publication 3-61: Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations” (Washington D.C.: The Joint Staff, 1997) p. III-12

⁷⁴ Legal Information Institute summarised by Elstad, MAJ, “Overcoming Information Operations Legal Limitations in Support of Domestic Operations” p. 32

⁷⁵ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 61

⁷⁶ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 120

⁷⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, “Field Manual 3-61.1” p. 9-1

⁷⁸ IO functions ““influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own.”

⁷⁹ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 120

products are almost always truthful and accurate, or should be. Psyops products may or may not be accurate or truthful and may be intentionally deceptive or dishonest.”⁸⁰ This latter definition suggests PSYOP, not PA, is the exception within IO. This confusion of definitions and functions is relatively widespread, with different branches defining these differently.⁸¹

There are also contradictions within military definitions which also exacerbate this issue. For example Joint Publication 3-53 states: “PA operators and activities shall not focus on directing or manipulating public actions or opinions.”⁸² This definition clashes with FM 3-61.1 *Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques and Procedures* which states the role of PA is to “present the Army’s perspective” in order to establish “confidence in and support for American soldiers” and “America’s Army to accomplish the assigned mission in accordance with our national values”.⁸³ This definition states PA ‘directs’ public opinion towards support for troops. Taylor states PA provides journalists with information, however the selection of information will help shape perceptions.⁸⁴ Although the information communicated may be *truthful* it may not represent the situation accurately. For example, the prioritisation of footage showing precision-guided strikes during *Desert Storm* suggested that the entire bombing campaign was precise, despite 90% of munitions being unguided.⁸⁵ Further evidence of this ‘directing’ of information is also present in FM 3-61.1. It states PA officers should, “determine the information needs of the various target audiences”, and then deliver information based on audience “requirements”. Information is then developed into “products” for dissemination to the target audience.⁸⁶ Therefore, PA does not release all information to a

⁸⁰ Global Focus, “Information Operations & Psychological Operations in Iraq”

⁸¹ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 121

⁸² Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Publication 3-53: Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations” (Washington D.C: The Joint Staff, 2003) p. I-9

⁸³ Headquarters, Department of the Army, “Field Manual 3-61.1” p. 5-2

⁸⁴ Taylor, Phillip M. “‘We Know Where You Are’: Psychological Operations During *Enduring Freedom*” in Freedman, Des and Thussu, Daya Kishan, (ed.) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, (London: SAGE, 2003) p. 104

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Headquarters, Department of the Army, “Field Manual 3-61.1” pp. 5-5/5-6

homogenous audience, but selects which ‘truths’ it releases to specific audiences, perhaps making its activities manipulative. Indeed, its activities appear to adhere to Joint Publication 1-02 definition of ‘propaganda’: “any form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes or behaviour of any group in order to benefit the sponsor...”⁸⁷ PA’s functions appears to correlate with PSYOP, defined by Joint Publication 3-13 as “operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behaviour of foreign governments, organisations, groups and individuals”.⁸⁸ The only major difference is that PSYOP must be directed at foreign audiences, its use of ‘*selected information*’, is also the central tenet of PA. Therefore, PA could essentially be considered ‘domestic PSYOP’. The limitation that PA cannot lie does not affect this conclusion, as the selective use of ‘truths’ can be equally manipulative, indeed, de Rooij, states that the functions of PA “fits directly into a psy-ops framework.”⁸⁹ However, this applies mainly to US operations; British PA appears to have remained distinct from PSYOP. For example Pawson, Director General of Corporate Communications, stated that they wished to distance themselves from the ‘American approach’, claiming: “We are quite clear to separate out media operations from, if you like, information and deception type of work.”⁹⁰ Indeed, in 2000, European newspapers revealed that during the Kosovo War US PSYOP officers worked at CNN as part of an internship programme. FAIR.org claims the military could have used the opportunity to gain intelligence on domestic media methods.⁹¹

⁸⁷ US Department of Defense, “Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms - Joint Publication 1-02” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 1998) p. 359

⁸⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Publication 3-13: Information Operations” p. GL-11

⁸⁹ de Rooij, Paul quoted by Schechter, Danny, “Selling the Iraq War: The Media Management Strategies We Never Saw” in Kamalipour, Yahya R. & Snow, Nancy, (ed.) *War, Media, and Propaganda: A Global Perspective*, (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004) pp. 27/28

⁹⁰ Pawson, A. quoted by Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 34/35

⁹¹ FAIR - Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting, “FAIR - MEDIA ADVISORY: Pentagon Propaganda Plan is Undemocratic, Possibly Illegal” <http://www.fair.org/activism/osi-propaganda.html> (accessed 6/5/2012)

The nature of the modern media environment has also eroded the distinction between PSYOP and PA. Messages communicated by PSYOP to foreign audiences can be discovered by domestic media and rebroadcast at home.⁹² An example of this, discussed below, is the toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue in Firdos Square.⁹³ Effectively, this inability to isolate the target audience led Wilson to conclude “a sharp distinction between foreign and domestic audiences cannot be maintained”,⁹⁴ further blurring distinctions between PSYOP and PA.

One element that arose prominently in the US prior to the Iraq War is the use of Public Relations (PR) firms in PA strategy.⁹⁵ PR is a specialised occupation in which, similarly to PA, ‘persuasive communications techniques are utilised in order to try and influence what are dubbed ‘target publics’.’⁹⁶ *PR Week*, stated that Rumsfeld was developing an informal ‘strategic communications group’ to assist in developing Pentagon messages.⁹⁷ One PR company, the Rendon Group, in particular, specialises in assisting US military operations. This relationship developed during the Gulf War where it helped organise and promote the Iraqi National Congress (INC).⁹⁸ Rendon’s firm was reemployed in 2001 and assisted with the development of the controversial Office of Strategic Influence.⁹⁹ Another prominent member of the media-management policy was Victoria Clarke, who is largely seen as responsible for developing the embedding programme. Clarke originally ran an office of PR firm, Hill and Knowlton, who were implicated in orchestrating the fabricated “babies torn

⁹² Brown, “Spinning the War” pp. 90/01

⁹³ Miller, David, “The Propaganda Machine” in Miller, David (ed.) *Tell me lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004) pp. 94/95

⁹⁴ Wilson, Clay. “Information Operations, Electronic Warfare, and Cyberwar: Capabilities and Related Policy Issues.” In CRS Report for Congress, RL311787 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007) p. 4

⁹⁵ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 25

⁹⁶ Campbell, Vincent, *Information Age Journalism: Journalism in an international context*, (London: Arnold, 2004) p. 97

⁹⁷ Rampton, Sheldon, and Stauber, John, *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush’s war on Iraq*, (London: Robinson, 2003) p. 39

⁹⁸ Miller et al. “War is Sell” p. 43

⁹⁹ Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 49

from incubators story” which played a role in justifying involvement in the Gulf War.¹⁰⁰

Clarke stated that she planned to run Pentagon operations in the same way she ran corporate campaigns.¹⁰¹ Other prominent PR specialists and firms involved in the US PA campaign include Charlotte Beers, an advertising specialist appointed as Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy in 2001, and Benador Associates, which worked with many pro-war and republican organisations, such as the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq.¹⁰²

The use of PR companies may have influenced the military to rely on ‘spin’ as a means of achieving information dominance. ‘Spin’ has long been used by both governments and corporations, both of which frequently employ PR companies.¹⁰³ Maltese states that “spinning a story involves twisting it to one’s advantage, using surrogates, press releases, radio actualities, and other friendly sources to deliver the line from an angle that puts the story in the best possible light.”¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, Campbell claims this concept involves influencing coverage through the staging of events and/or the “creation of a manipulative relationship with journalists”.¹⁰⁵ Both of these elements occurred during the Iraq War, as discussed below. Spin could be attractive to PA practitioners as it stands between the deception of PSYOP and the ‘truth-telling’ of PA. It allows for credibility by telling the truth; however in this case ‘truth’ is plural. Spin acts to encourage the adoption of its ‘truth’, which represents their interests most beneficially. Brown claims this “seeks to balance an active approach to shaping the media environment with a broader commitment to some rules of the game.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 27

¹⁰¹ Schechter, “Selling the Iraq War” p. 28

¹⁰² Kumar, Deepa, “Media, War, and Propaganda: Strategies of Information Management During the 2003 Iraq War” *Communications and Critical/Cultural Studies*, Vol. 3. No. 1, (March 2006) p. 58

¹⁰³ Campbell, *Information Age Journalism*, p. 89

¹⁰⁴ Maltese, J. A. *Spin Control: The White House Office of Communications and the management of Presidential News*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994) p. 215

¹⁰⁵ Campbell, *Information Age Journalism*, p. 89

¹⁰⁶ Brown, “Spinning the War” pp. 93/94

This illustrates a tendency for the military to devote resources to the management of domestic public opinion. This is conducted by PA, which uses selected ‘truths’ to communicate information publicly. However, it could also involve the input of PSYOP, either through deliberate communication with the public, or through information tailored to foreign audiences being ‘domesticated’. There is little evidence to suggest PA regularly lies, but to suggest a dedication to full disclosure of military information would be inaccurate, firstly for operational security issues, and secondly because such a disclosure could damage strategy. The military have certainly acknowledged this; a Ministry of Defence document notes: “we need to be aware of the ways in which public attitudes might shape and constrain military activity.”¹⁰⁷ Therefore public opinion, or ‘passion’, may be just as likely to ‘constrain’ strategy as support it. This is supported by scholars who claim that post-industrial war is becoming post-‘trinitarian’, or post-Clausewitzian.¹⁰⁸ As Western conflicts are no longer ‘wars of national survival’ the public may increasingly view conflict as more of a ‘spectator-sport’ where support is not guaranteed.¹⁰⁹ Clausewitz is not entirely redundant however; public opinion may induce a ‘heavy dose of Clausewitzian friction’ during wartime.¹¹⁰ For Clausewitz, ‘friction’ is forces which impact detrimentally on belligerents’ war-fighting, be it the weather, enemy resistance or logistical issues.¹¹¹ The fact that the informational element of national power is dependent on non-governmental entities means that unrestricted media coverage can affect public opinion, and therefore strategy.¹¹² As such the relationship between the military/administration and the public may be one which is increasingly

¹⁰⁷ Ministry of Defence, “The Future Strategic Context for Defence: A Lesson from History” http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/7CC94DFB-839A-4029-8BDD-5E87AF5CDF45/0/future_strategic_context.pdf (accessed 01/09/2012)

¹⁰⁸ McInnes, Colin, *Spectator-sport war: the West and Contemporary Conflict*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002) p. 69

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 2

¹¹⁰ Martemucci, MAJ. Matteo G. “Regaining the High Ground: The Challenges of Perception Management in National Strategy and Military Operations” *National Defense University, Norfolk, VA, Joint Advanced Warfighting School*, (June 2007) p. 20

¹¹¹ Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 120/121

¹¹² Martemucci, MAJ. “Regaining the High Ground” p. 20

adversarial. Curtis explains that during war with Yugoslavia the MoD identified public opinion as a 'target' along with Milosevic and his supporters. He concludes that "both are enemies, albeit in different ways."¹¹³ The word 'target' may therefore be more than semantic, with the public being seen as another body which must be 'dominated' in an informational sense. However, Major Schmidt states that there are 'targets' that must be destroyed and 'targets' that must be protected - public opinion is the latter.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Allen states that "IO, by definition, involves an adversarial situation" in which information sources are required to attack and defend.¹¹⁵ If public opinion is a target to defend, then the media, which influences the public, must be a target to attack. This conclusion is critical in examining the motives behind media-management policies during the Iraq War. Clausewitz stated that 'friction' can only be overcome with battle experience, therefore pre-Iraq War media policies will be examined to provide a background to those which developed later.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Curtis, Mark, "Psychological Warfare Against the Public: Iraq and Beyond" in Miller, David (ed.) *Tell me lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004) p. 77

¹¹⁴ Schmidt, MAJ. Todd A. "The Global Information Environment & 21st Century Warfare: Targeting Public Opinion in the 5th Dimension" *IO Sphere*, (Spring 2007)

¹¹⁵ Allen, *Information Operations Planning*, p. 17

¹¹⁶ Summers, Harry G. *On Strategy: A critical analysis of the Vietnam War*, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982) p. 33

Chapter 2: Military Media-Management Policy –

Vietnam to Iraq

“Hello, Bob, come back to lose this one for us, too?”

- Veteran officer of the Vietnam War to Bob Simon of CBS during 1991 Gulf War.¹¹⁷

Pre-Iraq War Media-Management Policy – The ‘Restrictive Model’

Prior to the Vietnam War it was assumed that the media would support government and military objectives by reporting in a jingoistic and positive fashion, as it had done during previous total wars.¹¹⁸ However, following the Vietnam War, the belief that the media was responsible for defeat, through its negative reporting and use of graphic imagery, developed.¹¹⁹ Indeed, there was no official censorship in Vietnam, primarily because President Johnson had not officially declared war.¹²⁰ Therefore, Vietnam highlights the importance of public opinion as a COG in ‘wars of choice’.¹²¹ Modern analysis of the Vietnam War broadly disagrees with the initial assessment of many officers and academics.¹²² Far from being negative, media coverage was generally supportive, at least until the Tet Offensive of 1968, by which time public opinion had already soured.¹²³ Other sources of discontent were more likely to affect public opinion, for example the rising casualty rate was significant, especially as the war continued and more US citizens either had

¹¹⁷ Maniaty, Tony, “From Vietnam to Iraq: Negative trends in television war reporting” *Pacific Journalism Review*, Vol. 14. No. 2, (2008) p. 92

¹¹⁸ McFeely, MAJ. “The News Media” p. 9

¹¹⁹ Carruthers, *The Media at War*, p. 145

¹²⁰ Baroody, Judith Raine, *Media Access and the Military: The Case of the Gulf War*, (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1998) p. 54

¹²¹ Webster, “Information Warfare in an Age of Globalization” p. 54

¹²² Carruthers, *The Media at War*, pp. 145/146

¹²³ Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, pp. 182/183

direct experience of the war or were relatives of casualties.¹²⁴ Furthermore, domestic coverage of anti-war demonstrations may have been more influential than war coverage as it publicised dissent and generated a sense of solidarity.¹²⁵ Generally, the media was much more likely to follow dissent, and reinforce pre-existing opinions than generate opposition.¹²⁶ Indeed, less than half of US television owners watched network news, while attentiveness to television coverage was low.¹²⁷ Carruthers concludes that "...television may have confirmed the trend towards disillusionment, but many academics are adamant that television did not set it; indeed was, in fact, considerably to its rear."¹²⁸ It is now generally understood that a hamstrung strategy, which failed to capitalise on tactical successes and ignored the psychological-political dimensions of war was responsible for defeat.^{129 130} However, the 'myth' that the media lost the war was pervasive and permeated much of the officer corps; in turn, it was passed on to junior officers with no actual experience of the conflict.¹³¹ Rid claims this 'lesson' was rarely written in doctrine but was communicated tacitly through narratives and anecdotes. Braestrup stated there is "no question that television coverage of Vietnam lingers large in the minds of senior military officers."¹³² This legacy may have influenced members of the Bush administration prior to the Iraq War. Prominent members such as Rumsfeld, Cheney and Powell; all developed their careers in this post-Vietnam era. The overwhelming lesson from Vietnam, as Belknap in 2002 concludes, was "Keep the press out!"¹³³ Lord claims this lesson is critical for limited wars, because "the stakes in such

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Baroody, *Media Access and the Military*, p. 60

¹²⁶ Jesser, Peter & Young, Peter, *The Media and the Military: From the Crimea to Desert Strike*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997) p. 80

¹²⁷ Carruthers, *The Media at War*, p. 152

¹²⁸ Ibid. pp. 152/153

¹²⁹ Baroody, *Media Access and the Military*, p. 60

¹³⁰ Lord, Carnes "The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy" p. 15

¹³¹ Baroody, *Media Access and the Military*, p. 60

¹³² Braestrup, Peter quoted by Rid, *War and Media Operations*, pp. 60/61

¹³³ Belknap, Margaret K. "The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk?" *Parametres* (Autumn 2002) p. 104

conflicts are relatively low, the pressure for preserving peacetimes rules of media engagement are difficult to resist.” He concluded in 1989 that “it is precisely these conflicts in which the political and psychological element in war is predominant, and which are therefore most susceptible to influence by media reporting.” His response to this issue was to restrict or eliminate media presence.¹³⁴

The Falklands War is a prime example of restrictive models of media-management.¹³⁵ The media aboard the British expedition to the Falklands were limited in their ability to report back to Britain, since they were dependent on military communications; this provided the military with measures of control.¹³⁶ Jesser and Young claim the military utilised this monopoly to manipulate and limit the media’s impact in this short campaign.¹³⁷ The US adopted similar policies which were instigated in later conflicts.¹³⁸ The invasions of Grenada and Panama in particular illustrate this; journalists were often refused entry to the battle-zone or allowed entry after the conclusion of hostilities. Those who gained access were restricted to ‘pools’ under military travel constraints.¹³⁹ Secretary of Defense at the time, Dick Cheney was largely responsible for these measures, perhaps illustrating a disdain for media reporting which would affect policies in Iraq.¹⁴⁰ Media criticism following Grenada led to the establishment of the Sidle Committee, which although stating that the media should be facilitated by the military, also asserted that the pool system should be retained as the only feasible means of access.¹⁴¹ During the Gulf War journalists were, once again, restricted to pools and accompanied by minders.¹⁴² Only a fraction of journalists, often those with a

¹³⁴ Lord, Carnes “The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy” pp. 25/26

¹³⁵ Taverner, LT COL, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century” p. 264

¹³⁶ Jesser, & Young, *The Media and the Military*, pp. 101/102

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 119

¹³⁸ Jesser, & Young, *The Media and the Military*, pp. 119

¹³⁹ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 5

¹⁴⁰ Snyder, LT COL, John B. “Seeing Through the Conflict: Military-Media Relations” U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks PA, (April 2003) p. 14

¹⁴¹ Baroody, *Media Access and the Military*, p. 65

¹⁴² Kellner, Douglas, *The Persian Gulf TV War*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992) p. 80

history of positive reporting, gained access to frontline units.¹⁴³ Therefore, much of the information available to journalists came from military briefings containing ‘carefully vetted pool footage of military successes [the journalists] had not remotely witnessed.’¹⁴⁴

However, by 2003 attitudes had shifted, far from excluding the media, they were invited into the military, with seemingly little restrictions.¹⁴⁵ FM 3-61.1 acknowledges the post-Vietnam frustrations of the media, expressing that pools only be used as a ‘last resort’.¹⁴⁶ The document contains a quote by General Peay, stating: “*It is important to support the efforts of the media and our dealings with them should not be confrontational, but professional and courteous.*”¹⁴⁷ This shift was influenced by several factors, primarily it was understood that the 21st century media would not depend on military communication facilities, instead they could utilise light-weight satellite dishes to report to editors.¹⁴⁸ Taverner concludes: “In short, technology has unshackled the media and the military has accepted that engagement is the only option; avoidance and control only leading to antagonism and consequent negative coverage.”¹⁴⁹ Another factor is the increase in attention afforded Information Warfare following the Gulf War, especially concepts of ‘command and control warfare’ which prioritises information.¹⁵⁰ Despite media misgivings about the Gulf War, for many it was defined by a “CNN Phenomenon”, whereby the media played a critical role in publically chronicling and presenting the war.¹⁵¹

An understanding of the media’s strategic potential, combined with decreases in ability to control the media arguably resulted in a situation whereby the media was ‘weaponised’ for

¹⁴³ Ibid. 84

¹⁴⁴ Maniaty, “From Vietnam to Iraq”, p. 93

¹⁴⁵ Snyder, LT COL, “Seeing Through the Conflict” p. 4

¹⁴⁶ Peay, J. H. Binford quoted in Headquarters, Department of the Army, “Field Manual 3-61.1” p. 4-8

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 4-1

¹⁴⁸ Taverner, LT COL, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century” pp. 269/270

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 270

¹⁵⁰ Gough, LTC Susan L. “The Evolution of Strategic Influence” *U.S. Army College, Carlisle Barracks, PA*, (April 2003) p. 26

¹⁵¹ Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 173

strategic use.¹⁵² For Laity, the media is usually a weapon the West must defend against,¹⁵³ however, Rid states that the media can be used by the West to help win wars by combining Clausewitzian concepts that “War is an act of force to compel the enemy to do our will” with Sun Tzu’s emphasis on the psychological dimension.¹⁵⁴ This allows the West to utilise the media as a ‘force multiplier’, which improves combat efficiency by ensuring high morale and public support.¹⁵⁵

Evidence of this could be seen in changes to operation naming conventions during the 1990s. Traditionally, operation titles should be ambiguous so as to not convey sensitive information (for example Operation Husky¹⁵⁶, Linebacker¹⁵⁷).¹⁵⁸ However, throughout the 1990s titles contained increasingly normative elements, For example: ‘Operation *Just Cause*’¹⁵⁹ ‘*Provide Comfort*’¹⁶⁰, ‘*Restore Hope*’¹⁶¹, ‘*Uphold Democracy*’¹⁶², ‘*Noble Anvil*’¹⁶³, ‘*Enduring Freedom*’¹⁶⁴ and ‘Operation *Iraqi Freedom*’.¹⁶⁵ ¹⁶⁶ Rampton and Stauber claim that every time such titles were mentioned in the media it “implicitly endorsed White House claims about the motives of war,”¹⁶⁷ while Thussu claims they develop a ‘feel-good factor’ in Western populations.¹⁶⁸ The British military retained the traditional conventions, titling the invasion of Iraq ‘Operation TELIC’.¹⁶⁹

¹⁵² Moorcraft & Taylor, *Shooting the Messenger*, p. 193

¹⁵³ Laity, “Straddling the Divide - Spinning for Both Sides” p. 287

¹⁵⁴ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, pp. 113/114

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 111

¹⁵⁶ Allied invasion of Sicily, 1943

¹⁵⁷ US air interdiction of North Vietnam, 1972

¹⁵⁸ BBC News “Libya: What do the military operation names mean?” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-12831743> (accessed 14/08/2012)

¹⁵⁹ US invasion of Panama, 1989

¹⁶⁰ US led maintenance of Northern Iraq no-fly zone to protect Kurdish civilians, 1991

¹⁶¹ US led operation to protect the distribution of humanitarian aid in Somalia, 1992

¹⁶² US led operation to depose Haitian military coup leaders, Haiti, 1994

¹⁶³ US designation of Operation Allied Force, the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, 1999

¹⁶⁴ US official designation for the War in Afghanistan, 2001

¹⁶⁵ US official designation for invasion of Iraq, 2003

¹⁶⁶ Thussu, “Live TV and Bloodless Deaths” p. 128

¹⁶⁷ Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, pp. 180/181

¹⁶⁸ Thussu, “Live TV and Bloodless Deaths” p. 129

¹⁶⁹ Moorcraft & Taylor, *Shooting the Messenger*, p. 183

These media-management developments coalesced during the Iraq War, in which the media were given greater access to front-line units. The media had long advocated for this, especially due to the emergence of 24/7 news and its insatiable informational appetite.¹⁷⁰ Brookes et al. claim that the relative lack of criticism for embedding was primarily due to requirements to fill air-time.¹⁷¹ Initially, embedding seemed to benefit both the media and military, reaching what, Robert Fox, termed ‘The Bargain’ based on mutual respect and understanding.¹⁷² Rid claims that embedding created a situation where commanders’ and reporters’ objectives converged: “The traditional zero-sum thinking of opposed interests and structural conflicts between the two institutions gave way to a positive-sum logic.”¹⁷³ For the media they gained the access to news-worthy stories, for the military they were able to weaponise the media.

Criticism of this relationship may have been reduced by the domestic environment following 9/11.¹⁷⁴ Firstly, the War on Terror did not fit well into the traditional interpretative frameworks of the press regarding conflict. The ‘terrorism’ narrative had overwritten inter-state narratives, while the unexpectedness of 9/11 handed the initiative to the administration who led the framing of the situation.¹⁷⁵ The Project for a New American Century, which contained high-ranking Bush officials, advocated maintaining global US pre-eminence, which they claimed would require “some catastrophic and catalysing event – like a New Pearl Harbor”.¹⁷⁶ 9/11 provided the opportunity some neoconservatives may have been waiting for;

¹⁷⁰ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 13

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 13

¹⁷² Fox, Robert summarised by Taverner, LT COL, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century” p. 273

¹⁷³ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 151

¹⁷⁴ Gowing, Nik, “Journalists and War: The Troubling New Tensions Post 9/11” in Freedman, Des and Thussu, Daya Kishan, (ed.) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, (London: SAGE, 2003) p. 231

¹⁷⁵ Prentoulis, Marina and Tumber, Howard “Journalists Under Fire: Subcultures, Objectivity and Emotional Literacy” in Freedman, Des and Thussu, Daya Kishan, (ed.) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, (London: SAGE, 2003) p. 226

¹⁷⁶ Project for a New American Century, *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century*, (2000) <http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf> (accessed 05/09/2012) p. 51

allowing for its rapid exploitation. Furthermore, the administration became increasingly aggressive towards dissenting media, with White House Press Secretary Fleischer stating they should “watch what they say, what they do.”¹⁷⁷ Secondly, the nature of the 9/11 attacks led to the emergence of emotive and attached reporting styles.¹⁷⁸ Such styles conflict with the media’s professional role as detached, objective purveyors of information - 9/11 resulted in a situation whereby reporter Gereldo Rivera could publicly claim that he wished to kill Bin Laden and “kick his head in, then bring it home and bronze it.”¹⁷⁹

However, there was some criticism of the Coalition’s media policy. Indeed, the US Office of Strategic Influence was disbanded amongst controversy that it planned to leak false stories into foreign press.¹⁸⁰ Although some have claimed this accusation was unfounded, the incident illustrates the media was not entirely placated.¹⁸¹

Nevertheless, there was little mainstream criticism of embedding; instead it was often marked with enthusiasm.¹⁸² Criticism was limited to the ‘old breed’ of war-correspondents, such as Pilger and Hersh, who saw it as an attempt to co-opt and manipulate journalists.¹⁸³ More contemporary analysis of embedding often provides similar claims.

Coalition Media-Management in Iraq

The hallmark of Coalition media-management policy during Iraq was embedding - the placing of journalists (known as ‘embeds’) into military units for the duration of the conflict. The concept is not new, with journalists previously accompanying troops, however the difference in Iraq would be their semi-permanent status with *one* unit and their inability to

¹⁷⁷ Fleischer, Ari quoted by Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 167

¹⁷⁸ Prentoulis and Tumber, “Journalists Under Fire” pp. 226/227

¹⁷⁹ Gereldo Rivera quoted by Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 184

¹⁸⁰ Brown, “Spinning the War” p. 92

¹⁸¹ Martemucci, MAJ. “Regaining the High Ground” p. 58

¹⁸² Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, “The Vanishing Embedded Reporter in Iraq” <http://www.journalism.org/node/2596> (accessed 5/4/2012)

¹⁸³ Hersh, Seymour summarised by Farrell, Stephen, “Embedistan” <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/25/embedistan-2/> (accessed 3/5/2012)

freely roam.¹⁸⁴ Experiments with embedding were conducted during the Afghanistan campaign in 2001/2. The experiments were seen as successful as media coverage largely remained positive, while military success was extrapolated to suggest success in the entire War on Terror.¹⁸⁵ The Coalition Information Centers, were also established during this conflict.¹⁸⁶ Originally developed by Downing Street Director of Communications Alistair Campbell, their purpose was to ensure Coalition messages were consistent.¹⁸⁷ The US later morphed the CIC, into the Office of Global Communications (OGC),¹⁸⁸ which Rampton and Stauber claim was designed to control “the message within the administration, so no one - not even Vice President Dick Cheney - freelances on Iraq.”¹⁸⁹ Although not directly responsible for embedding these organisations illustrate the role information played in planning for the Iraq War, indeed, Clarke, was present at most OGC meetings.¹⁹⁰ On the ground the policy would be implemented by the DoD, Pentagon and MoD.¹⁹¹

However, differences existed between American and British implementation of embedding. Firstly, British attempts at war planning were hindered by pressure to reach diplomatic settlements to the crisis, this was less of a concern in the US where public support for war was higher.¹⁹² Secondly, the British embedding system utilised Forward Transmission Units where reports would be gathered, following a model similar to that of ‘pooling’, although less restrictive.¹⁹³ This system was unpopular but illustrates that the British ‘had not quite grasped the principle’ behind embedding.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁴ Payne, Kenneth, “The Media as an Instrument of War” *Parameters*, (Spring 2005) p. 86

¹⁸⁵ Schechter, “Selling the Iraq War” p. 27

¹⁸⁶ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 23

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Gough, LTC Susan L. “The Evolution of Strategic Influence” p. 29

¹⁸⁹ Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 39

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 15

¹⁹² Ibid. p. 60

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 66

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 88

The official DoD statement concerning embedding claimed:

“Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and in the years ahead. This holds true for the US public; the public in allied countries whose opinion can affect the durability of our coalition; and publics in countries where we conduct operations, whose perception of us can affect the cost and duration of our involvement. Our ultimate strategic success... will come in our long-term commitment to supporting our democratic ideals. We need to tell the factual story - good or bad - before others seed the media with disinformation and distortions...”¹⁹⁵

Another cited reason was a desire to show the professionalism of Coalition forces, as Clarke stated: “The strategy was pretty simple - if good things are happening, you want people to see it. And I knew that if people could see, both in the U.S. and abroad, the men and women of our U.S. military, they would be impressed...”¹⁹⁶ British sources gave similar reasons, including a desire to counter enemy propaganda.¹⁹⁷ Rid claims this counter-information element, as opposed to public ‘political education’, was the main rationale that “sold the program within the DoD.”¹⁹⁸

Additional justifications concerned journalistic needs and safety, stating that embedding would provide what journalists required, while improving military-media relations and keeping them safer.^{199 200} The murder of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan in 2002 had alerted media organisations to the dangers of asymmetrical conflicts, therefore encouraging their embedment.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ US Department of Defense, “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations/Deployments in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR)” <http://www.defense.gov/news/feb2003/d20030228pag.pdf> (accessed 01/09/2012)

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Clarke, Victoria conducted by Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 39

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 58

¹⁹⁸ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 129

¹⁹⁹ Palmer, Jerry & Tumber, Howard, *Media at War: The Iraq Crisis*, (London: Sage Publications, 2004) p. 17

²⁰⁰ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 45

²⁰¹ Farrell, “Embedistan”

Critics have claimed that embedding was adopted for ulterior motives, namely the co-option and ‘pacification’ of journalists in order to produce positive reporting. The argument claims that journalists who spend time with troops would invariably become biased and ‘seduced’ into military lifestyle.²⁰² As Carruthers explains: “In short, civilian attitudes and values were over-ridden by a new ‘social world’ in which military norms predominated. The re-orientated journalists accepted matter-of-factly, as the reality of war, acts which in civilian life they might have found unconscionable.”²⁰³ This phenomenon is a common contentious issue within journalism, especially in relation to ‘beat’ journalists who cover specific areas, such as crime or politics. Interaction with the same sources creates relationships and could lead to the socialisation of the journalist into occupational cultures where their ‘understandings and values coheres with that of their sources, therefore resulting in biased reporting.’²⁰⁴ In war, journalists act as ‘surrogates’ for civilians, their socialisation may lead to them viewing situations differently, even subconsciously, than civilians, resulting in subjectivity.²⁰⁵

Objectivity has long been a cornerstone of journalism and is characterised by neutral reporting devoid of personal values. Objective style is defined by impersonal reporting of information and should almost always use the third-person to remove the reporters’ interpretations.²⁰⁶ Fox and Park conducted a study of CNN’s coverage of the Iraq War to investigate whether embedding resulted in increased use in first-person pronouns. Importantly, the use of collective pronouns, including ‘we’ and ‘us’, suggests the journalist has identified with their accompanying units by including themselves within the collective. The use of ‘I’ suggests the journalist has placed themselves within the story, therefore turning

²⁰² Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 65

²⁰³ Carruthers, *The Media at War*, p. 158

²⁰⁴ Campbell, *Information Age Journalism*, p. 84

²⁰⁵ Fox, Julia R. & Park, Byungho, “The “I” of Embedded Reporting: An Analysis of CNN Coverage of the “Shock and Awe” Campaign” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Vol. 50, Iss. 1, (2006) p. 37

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 37/38

into the ‘subject’ and no longer remaining an impersonal observer.²⁰⁷ Their study concluded embedded journalists were more likely to use first-person pronouns.²⁰⁸ On average they used ‘I’ 3.55 times per story, compared to 0.93 times for non-embedded.²⁰⁹ The use of inclusive pronouns - ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘ours’ - was higher for embeds, who used it 0.39 times per story, compared to zero mentions in non-embeds.²¹⁰ Fox and Park claim these results are significant and support claims that embedded journalists placed themselves centrally in the story and identified with troops. However, the study did not investigate the context of the use of ‘I’ in reports, which frequently was used to provide journalists’ locations or eye-witness reports.²¹¹ Regardless, a single mention of ‘I’ would be sufficient, as in the case for non-embeds; its continued use suggests embeds were becoming central to their reports.²¹² An analysis conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism broadly supported embedding, stating it provided more information than previous media-management policies. Yet, it identified that the “inevitable bias that comes with point of view is a risk journalists and viewers must beware of.”²¹³ Brookes et al.’s content analysis of embedded reporting within British television found that embeds reports were *more* balanced than studio reports. Embeds reported Iraqi reactions to the invasion in more balanced terms than studio anchors who prioritised reports of civilians welcoming Coalition troops.²¹⁴ Furthermore, embeds were no more likely to suggest Iraq had WMDs (thereby promoting official justification for the war) than any other type of report.²¹⁵

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 48

²⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 45

²¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 45-47

²¹¹ Ibid. p. 46

²¹² Ibid. pp. 47/48

²¹³ Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Embedded Reporters: What Are Americans Getting?”

²¹⁴ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 124

²¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 121/122

Qualitative assessments, however, may provide evidence of embeds identifying with troops. Interviews conducted by Brookes et al. show that all their journalist respondents expressed awareness of the issue.²¹⁶ Several such as Ben Brown, Gavin Hewitt and Clive Myrie also state there were occasions when they felt uncomfortably close to the soldiers, often in combat situations. Brown stated that after being saved from an Iraqi sniper by British troops it:

“...was the closest I felt to being almost too close to the troops, because me and my cameramen both felt a sense of elation that this guy was dead, which is something I’ve never felt before...”²¹⁷

Other journalists expressed similar emotions, particularly in relation to their attitudes towards Iraqi soldiers.²¹⁸ Knightly claims embedding lead to a loss of distinction between warrior and correspondent; several anecdotes appear to support this.²¹⁹ In particular, Hewitt located and pointed out an approaching truck to US forces, who promptly fired upon it.²²⁰ The truck was filled with munitions; however the incident highlights the issue of soldiers and journalists sharing mutual security, with only the most professional (and arguably illogical) journalists placing detachment over personal safety, as Chris Ayres stated: “Of course, I was hardly objective... my chances of avoiding death at the hands of suicide bombers were directly linked to the Marines’ ability to kill the enemy.”²²¹ However, identification may not have been with the war effort generally, but more explicitly with troops.²²²

Although such statements by journalists are relatively common, they are at best anecdotal, especially considering the scale of embedding. They also illustrate that journalists were aware of the issues and could therefore mitigate their effect in actual reporting. Both the studies of Brookes et al. and Aday et al. conclude that although identification *did* occur, it did not affect

²¹⁶ Ibid. p. 94

²¹⁷ Interview with Brown, Ben conducted by Brookes et al. *Shoot First Ask Questions Later*, p. 95

²¹⁸ Campbell, *Information Age Journalism*, p. 86

²¹⁹ Knightley, Phillip, “History or Bunkum?” *British Journalism Review*, Vol. 14 Iss. 2 (2003) p. 9

²²⁰ Interview with Hewitt, Gavin conducted by Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 95

²²¹ Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 62

²²² Ayres, Chris, quoted in Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 186

the objectivity of reports;^{223 224} although Brookes et al. claim US coverage was more biased than British.²²⁵ Indeed, one particularly controversial story, the US shooting of civilians at a checkpoint, was reported by an embed and contradicted official statements.²²⁶ Furthermore, Fox and Park suggest that use of the first-person does not necessarily result in subjectivity, or alternatively that the using the third-person ensures objectivity. Reporters' reliance on sources means they are communicating *subjective interpretations*, therefore detached writing styles do not ensure objectivity, essentially: "... embedded reporters who relayed firsthand observations may actually have been more objective than nonembedded reporters who relied more on others' interpretations of events."²²⁷ Ultimately, it is inaccurate to claim journalists were co-opted - identification and relationships occurred - but there is no clear evidence they affected the objectivity of reporting, indeed, anchor reports in studios adhered to the government line closer than embeds.²²⁸ Embeds may have held sympathy for troops they accompanied, but that does not necessarily translate into support for the administration. Therefore, claims that embeds, due to identification, consisted government 'propagandists'²²⁹ cannot be maintained. Although stating PA planners accepted a 'Stockholm syndrome' may develop, Rid claims this was not central to planning, instead it was a "speculative, soft and insufficiently reliable" prediction.²³⁰

Another criticism of embedding was its inability to convey an accurate picture of the entire war, due to its emphasis on combat and tactical information. Reporting was rarely limited by any official, or semi-official, censorship, indeed many journalists were surprised about the

²²³ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 188/189

²²⁴ Aday, et al, "Embedding the Truth" pp. 14/15

²²⁵ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 188/189

²²⁶ Ibid. pp. 141/142

²²⁷ Fox & Park, , "The 'I' of Embedded Reporting" p. 48

²²⁸ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 125

²²⁹ Kellner, Douglas, "9/11, Spectacles of Terror, and Media Manipulation", in Miller, David (ed.) *Tell me lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004) p. 151

²³⁰ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 131

amount of information they received.²³¹ The only major attempt at censorship occurred when a commander of a failed operation attempted to forbid an embed from reporting what had occurred.²³² However, this episode is significant precisely because such occurrences were almost universally rare.²³³ Those who were censored claimed it was often for justified reasons of operational security.²³⁴ Miller, however, claims this is tantamount to censorship, stating that the list of what journalists could report was shorter than the list of restrictions, suggesting autonomy was exchanged for security.²³⁵ Nonetheless journalists generally willingly accepted such limitations, especially when they may be harmed through violations of guidelines.^{236 237} The restriction on journalists' movement, however, could be considered censorship, as Alex Thomson stated: "I am still amazed by people who will tell you that they weren't censored. Censorship is restricting someone's freedom of movement as much as it is restricting what someone can and cannot film."²³⁸ The military could restrict access to negative areas, such as towns with civilian casualties, while facilitating travel to positive areas, such as suspected terrorist camps.²³⁹

Information cannot be limited merely by censorship, but also by the nature of reporting. Much of the information reported by embeds was of a narrow nature, leading to Laity terming it 'narrow-casting' as opposed to 'broadcasting'.²⁴⁰ Rid agrees stating embedding resulted in 'soda-straw' views "rich in human and tactical detail but poor in abstract and strategic

²³¹ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 68/69

²³² Ibid. 95/96

²³³ Ibid. p. 96

²³⁴ Lynch, Jake, "Reporting Iraq - what went right? what went wrong?" in Biressi, Anita & Nunn, Heather, (ed.) *Mediaactive, issue 3: Mediawar*, (London: Barefoot Publications, 2003) p. 122

²³⁵ Miller, "The Propaganda Machine" p. 89

²³⁶ Taverner, LT COL, "Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century" p. 272

²³⁷ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 98

²³⁸ Interview with Thomson, Alex conducted by Brookes et al, *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 97

²³⁹ Ibid. pp. 97/98

²⁴⁰ Laity, Mark, "Afterword" in Connelly, Mark & Welch, David, *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005) p. 293

oversight”.²⁴¹ The PEJ study support these claims, suggesting 94% of embedded reports were primarily factual, while 47% covered military actions.²⁴² Furthermore, embeds often provided ‘day-in-the-life’ reports or reported on how to conduct military tasks.²⁴³ Although perhaps interesting to the uninitiated, they failed to provide opportunity for critical discourse on the war.²⁴⁴ This dynamic could have been part of deliberate plans to distract reporting from more controversial issues, indeed Bryan Whitman of the Pentagon expressed awareness, stating: “The press pay for [close access], of course, because it is very deep, rich coverage, but it’s not very broad.”²⁴⁵ Some media outlets, especially American, stated this coverage could benefit the public, CNN anchor Bill Hemmer claimed: “To have journalists in with these Marines and tell us first hand... that the Marines are hunkered down in bunkers wearing gas masks and chemical suits... that is priceless information... it’s given our viewers a tremendous vantage point...”²⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the coverage attracted some criticism, including from the British government, with Defence Minister Hoon stating that tactical information failed to convey the restraint and discrimination British forces were employing.²⁴⁷ For Brookes et al. the issue of limited perspectives is more important than those of journalistic impartiality, as it “...forced wider questions about the war into the background and made the moment of victory... the climax of the narrative.”²⁴⁸

Embedding also acted to place a ‘human face’ on the war by concentrating coverage on soldiers.²⁴⁹ The Aday et al. study provides evidence, with Coalition soldiers being quoted in 51.4%, and pictured in 83.2% of embedded reports, compared with only 33.8% and 65.6% in

²⁴¹ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 150

²⁴² Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Embedded Reporters”

²⁴³ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc.*, p. 86

²⁴⁴ Hoskins, Andrew, *Televising War: from Vietnam to Iraq*, (London: Continuum, 2004) p. 75

²⁴⁵ Whitman, Bryan quoted in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 14

²⁴⁶ Hemmer, Bill quoted in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 49

²⁴⁷ Hoon, Geoff summarised in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 49

²⁴⁸ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 154/155

²⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 91

non-embedded.²⁵⁰ This reflects journalistic trends developing throughout the 1990s, a PEJ study found that: “There was been a shift towards lifestyle, celebrity, entertainment and celebrity crime/scandal in the news and away from government and foreign affairs.”²⁵¹ The number of such stories doubled from 1977 to 1997.²⁵² This approach has been criticised for distracting attention away from the meta-issues of war by concentrating on the tactical level.²⁵³ Journalist David Shaw argues this type of coverage is desirable: “I see nothing wrong and a great deal right with real time television stories and pictures and next day newspaper accounts of individual battles and triumphs, tragedies and daily routines of individual soldiers.”²⁵⁴ Such coverage seemed to appear more frequently on US networks, perhaps due to higher levels of public support,²⁵⁵ and a different journalistic culture, which particularly after 9/11, favoured an attached style.²⁵⁶ The dynamic was aided by the tendency for US embeds to be placed with troops from their local area, such reporters often prioritised human interest reports and were generally the most supportive.²⁵⁷ Admiral McCreary explains this dynamic was sought by the military:

“...we need the support of the American people for our troops - not for the issue... and what better way for people to understand that than to put the face of the troops as the face of the war... while you may or may not agree with the war, you really support them and them coming back alive.”²⁵⁸

This concept of ‘human-interest’ stories could provide impetus for the ‘support the troops’ mentality adopted by media outlets. Even *The Daily Mirror*, an anti-war tabloid, felt

²⁵⁰ Aday, et al, “Embedding the Truth” pp. 15/16

²⁵¹ Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Changing Definitions of News (1998)” <http://www.journalism.org/node/442> (accessed 15/7/2012)

²⁵² Thussu, “Live TV and Bloodless Deaths” p. 123

²⁵³ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 41

²⁵⁴ Shaw, David quoted in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 50

²⁵⁵ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 41

²⁵⁶ Prentoulis and Tumber, “Journalists Under Fire” p. 228

²⁵⁷ Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 19

²⁵⁸ McCreary, ADM Terry, quoted in Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 51

compelled to support troops during the invasion, with its editor Piers Morgan stating: "... I have never seen such a switch in public opinion... It's entirely down to the natural sense in this country... that once a war starts... we must unequivocally support our boys and girls."²⁵⁹

Public opinion did dramatically change. Prior to the invasion 46% of Britons supported the action, this rose to 83% during the conflict, and dropped to 44% in September 2003.²⁶⁰ Of those who changed their opinion 61% stated it was due to a desire to support the troops.²⁶¹

This phenomenon may be particularly important to policy-makers as it greatly increased support for a controversial war. Furthermore, Stahl states it directs dissent away from the policy, by equating support for troops with support for the policy, resulting in a situation where it "relocates the decision to wage war from the air-conditioned Washington, DC, office to the tent in the desert."²⁶² Opposition towards the policy also suggested opposition towards the troops, effectively silencing anti-war sentiment.²⁶³

Therefore, the media, during the invasion, rarely questioned the wars justification, but prioritised the military advance, providing little contextualisation of this into a wider narrative.²⁶⁴ Such actions helped to preserve and protect public will from controversial issues that could affect support levels. Moreover, success in the war politically was increasingly associated with success militarily, indeed journalist Andrew Marr claimed that, following the capture of Baghdad, Tony Blair has been 'proven right' and 'vindicated', despite no evidence of WMDs.²⁶⁵ Hoskins claims that embedding, which encouraged such reporting, had resulted

²⁵⁹ Morgan, Piers quoted in Freedman, Des, "The *Daily Mirror* and the war on Iraq" in Biressi, Anita & Nunn, Heather, (ed.) *Mediaactive, issue 3: Mediawar*, (London: Barefoot Publications, 2003) pp. 102/103

²⁶⁰ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 160

²⁶¹ Ibid. p. 161

²⁶² Stahl, *Militainment, Inc*, p. 29

²⁶³ Lowery, Alan (Director) & Pilger, John (Director/Writer) *The War You Don't See*, (Dartmouth Films, 2010)

²⁶⁴ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 41

²⁶⁵ Marr, Andrew quoted in Brookes, Rod and Lewis, Justin, "Reporting the War on British Television" in Miller, David (ed.) *Tell me lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004) p. 134

in the Pentagon “planting spokesmen and women... all over the battlefield.”²⁶⁶ Importantly, for the conclusion however, is that the media’s hand was not forced in this regard. They were not overtly pressurised by the military to prioritise what they had. There were often media assets - unilateral journalists, experts, Baghdad reporters - who could have contextualised reports, however, it seems that these were underused in favour of exciting footage.

This development is relatable to claims that Western war increasingly resembles ‘spectator-sport’ or entertainment for a population which has little invested in modern conflict. McInnes argues that Western populations “...sympathise but do not suffer, they emphasise but do not experience...”²⁶⁷ For scholars of ‘spectator war’, the media plays a central role, Ignatieff claims it becomes a “decisive theatre of operations”,²⁶⁸ McInnes states it acts as the “window on the world” through which the West are provided information.²⁶⁹ The media is effective in defining the perception of warfare since its activities are commonly seen as being pursued with objectivity - which McInnes claims is not always certain.²⁷⁰ Stahl argues ‘militainment’ fully arrived in Western media during the Iraq War. Far from trying to convince the audience to any political direction, they were merely asked to watch conflict; to the extent they become “submissive, politically disconnected, complacent and deactivated.”²⁷¹ This differs from traditional propaganda which suggests ‘*why we fight*’, militainment instead communicates ‘*that we fight*’ to the expense of wider political discourse.²⁷² Features of Iraq War news coverage which exemplify this include the use of entertainment formats, computer generated graphics, footage of missile strikes and satellite images, ‘chat-show’ commentary, entertainment journalists and female anchors selected for their appearance.^{273 274} Rampton

²⁶⁶ Hoskins, *Televising War*, p. 60

²⁶⁷ McInnes, *Spectator-sport war*, p. 2

²⁶⁸ Ignatieff, Michael, *Virtual War*, (London, Chatto & Windus, 2000) pp. 191-193

²⁶⁹ McInnes, *Spectator-sport war*, p. 145

²⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 147

²⁷¹ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc*, p. 20

²⁷² Ibid. p. 31

²⁷³ Thussu, “Live TV and Bloodless Deaths” p. 124

and Stauber highlight Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor* as evidence of this, stating that O'Reilly's confrontational approach does not generate discussion but acts as entertainment, akin to watching WWE Wrestling.²⁷⁵ Several times during the war commentators expressed a similarity to sport: one executive described coverage as "extraordinary - it almost feels like World Cup football..."²⁷⁶ while former Wrestler-turned-expert-commentator, Jesse Ventura stated "It reminds me a lot of the Super Bowl."²⁷⁷ Presenting war as entertainment can also act to sanitise it, despite the proximity to combat, graphic images showing casualties were rare on Western media.²⁷⁸ 21% of embedded reports showed fired weapons, however none contained images of people being hit.²⁷⁹ Stahl claims by sanitising the war it becomes palatable to be consumed by spectators.²⁸⁰ This relates to concerns that graphic imagery can diminish public support, and can result in casualties, both friendly and enemy, becoming 'invisible'.²⁸¹ The controversy following Al Jazeera's showing of dead American soldiers illustrates the unwillingness of Coalition administrators to allow friendly casualties to be shown.²⁸² Commercial networks may prevent showing such images for fears it will impact upon their ratings.²⁸³ Viewers surveyed after the Gulf War stated their main reasons for a disdain of graphic images were fears it will upset children, combined with a dislike of seeing corpses.²⁸⁴ Therefore, journalists may be censoring themselves by omitting to record events which they know will not receive airtime.²⁸⁵ Brookes et al. concluded: "It seems acceptable to

²⁷⁴ Moorcraft & Taylor, *Shooting the Messenger*, p. 185

²⁷⁵ Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 165

²⁷⁶ Pilger, John, "Crime Against Humanity" in Miller, David (ed.) *Tell me lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004) p. 30

²⁷⁷ Ventura, Jesse quoted in Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 181

²⁷⁸ Petley, Julian, "'Let the Atrocious Images Haunt Us'" in Miller, David (ed.) *Tell me lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004) p. 164

²⁷⁹ Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Embedded Reporters"

²⁸⁰ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc.*, pp. 25/26

²⁸¹ Ibid. p. 26

²⁸² Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 41

²⁸³ Petley, Julian, "'Let the Atrocious Images Haunt Us'" p. 167

²⁸⁴ Morrison, David E, *Television and the Gulf War*, (London: J. Libbey, 1992) p. 33

²⁸⁵ Petley, Julian, "'Let the Atrocious Images Haunt Us'" p. 171

display those at the tip of the spear, but only in the professional way in which the spear is held, not the direct effect to which the spear is put...²⁸⁶

Associated with concepts of militainment, is 'techno-fetishism', whereby media coverage becomes overly concerned with military hardware, with technical discussion overriding broader issues of the war.²⁸⁷ Images of armaments featured in news graphics,²⁸⁸ while CNN's website featured full information of weapons used by the Coalition, complete with 3D models and bombing animations (figure 2).²⁸⁹

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War Tracker

Forces

U.S. & Coalition

Iraq

Weapons

Maps

On the Scene

Sights & Sounds

Impact

Heroes of War

Struggle for Iraq

Forces: Weapons/3D Models

3D MODELS (Cut-3D plug-in required)

SELECT

EA-18 EF EA-18 CG F-14 F-117A F-15C F-15 A-10 B-52 B1-B B2 U-2 E-3 EA-67 M1A1 M1A2 LAV-25

Machine Gun | Fire Missiles | Start Rotation | Stop Rotation | Reset

A-10/OA-10 Thunderbolt II

Primary Function: A-10 (close air support), OA-10 (airborne forward air control)

Speed: 420 mph

Armament: One 30 mm GAU-8/A seven-barrel Gatling gun; up to 16,000 lbs of mixed ordnance on eight under-wing and three under-fuselage pylon stations, including 500-pound and 2,000-pound bombs, incendiary cluster bombs, mine dispensing munitions, AGM-65 Maverick missiles and laser-guided/electro-optically guided bombs; infrared countermeasure flares; electronic countermeasure chaff; jammer pods; 2.75-inch rockets; illumination flares and AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles.

Crew: One

Forces: Weapons Deployments in the Persian Gulf

3D MODELS (Cut-3D plug-in required)

☐ U.S./Coalition Forces ☐ Iraqi Forces

MUNITIONS			AIRCRAFT		
AGM-88	Tombaw	AGM-84D	F-15B EF	EA-18 CG	F-14
AGM-154A	AGM-65	GBU-12	F-117A	F-16C	F-15
Soud C	MK-82	MOAB	A-10	B-52	B1-B
			B2	U-2	E-3
			EA-67	C-130	AC-130
GROUND WEAPONS			AIRCRAFT		
M109	M1A1	Humvee	HH-64	CH-53	UH-1
T-72	M242	LAV-25			
AK-47	M16A2				

MUNITIONS

COALITION	IRAQ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3D models (Cut-3D plug-in required) JCM air-to-surface precision bomb JSCM air-to-surface precision bomb GBU laser-guided bombs GBU-26/37 "bunker-buster" bomb Streaker 15,000-pound bomb HB-2 500-pound bomb Mk-84 2,000-pound bomb Thermobaric weapon Tombaw/AGM-88 cruise missiles Have Nap missile Maverick air-to-surface missile HARM anti-radar missile AIM-120 air-to-air missile Hotfire air-to-surface missile TCM anti-aircraft missile Shoof air-to-aircraft missile Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb (MOAB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shah-3 surface-to-air missile Shah-2M surface-to-air missile Shah-1 surface-to-air missile Roland surface-to-air missile Anti-tank missile Fahd 200 cruise missile Soud B ballistic missile Al-Hussein ballistic missile Al-Samoud ballistic missile Soud missile launcher

GROUND WEAPONS

COALITION	IRAQ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3D models (Cut-3D plug-in required) Up-armor Humvee M1A1 Abrams battle tank M2A3 Bradley fighting vehicle M6 Bradley linebacker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T-72 battle tank T-62 battle tank T-54 battle tank PT-76 amphibious light tank BRM armored vehicle

Figure 2 - Armament information and 3D Models on CNN.com

²⁸⁶ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 73

²⁸⁷ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc.*, p. 28

²⁸⁸ Lowery & Pilger, *The War You Don't See*

²⁸⁹ CNN "War in Iraq Main Page" <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/iraq/> (accessed 27/8/2012)

This section, featured more prominently on CNN's 'War in Iraq Main Page' than sections concerning the invasion's impact.²⁹⁰ Stahl claims the use of bomb-mounted cameras and 'weapon-view footage' allows us to form first-person relationships with weapons and feel 'deputised' into conflict.²⁹¹ Embedding, which allowed journalists to be near equipment, aided this adoption of techno-fetishism.

Again, this highlights how the spectacle of combat overrode the wider issues - *what* happened superseded *why* it happened. This allows the emphasis to move away from the point of policy creation, to the point of execution.²⁹²

The development of these issues is relatable to the commercial imperatives of network television news. With competition in the media landscape increasing, news media has been forced to adopt 'infotainment' in order to attract audiences.²⁹³ Indeed, many US news networks are owned by entertainment conglomerates, such as AOL-Time Warner, Disney and Viacom.²⁹⁴ The development of media-entertainment-complexes during Regan-era deregulation allowed for absorption of smaller, independent outlets, resulting in the homogenisation of competing perspectives.²⁹⁵ During the Iraq War, a jingoistic perspective became the most lucrative, especially for US networks.²⁹⁶ The success of Fox, the most overtly patriotic network, is evidence for this. This generated a so-called 'Fox effect' by which other broadcasters moved their coverage closer to Fox's style in order to generate revenue.²⁹⁷ This may not be limited to the US; a major reason for *The Mirror* altering its anti-war position was due to declining circulation.²⁹⁸ This resulted in a situation where negative

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc.*, pp. 44/45

²⁹² Ibid. p. 30

²⁹³ Thussu, "Live TV and Bloodless Deaths" p. 112

²⁹⁴ Kumar, Deepa, "Media, War, and Propaganda" p. 51

²⁹⁵ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc.*, p. 23

²⁹⁶ Hoskins, *Televising War*, p. 68

²⁹⁷ Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, p. 174

²⁹⁸ Freedman, Des, "The *Daily Mirror* and the war on Iraq" pp. 104/105

coverage was deemed 'unpatriotic' and therefore unprofitable. Embedding provided the media outlets with exciting footage which fitted into their infotainment formats. This was further supported by the activities of non-governmental pressure groups, such as conservative media-watchdog, the Media Research Center, and websites such as FreeRepublic.com, who criticised any liberal or critical media, as MSNBC President Erik Sorenson stated: "Any misstep and you get into trouble with these guys and have the Patriotism Police hunt you down."²⁹⁹

The nature of 24/7 news channels also aided these developments. 70% of Americans received their news from 24 hour formats, making the concept more lucrative and competitive.³⁰⁰

Rolling news requires constant information to maintain its attractiveness, Laity claims this imperative to 'feed the beast' results in hasty judgements and speculation, diminishing news credibility.³⁰¹ Following the Iraq War, controversy surrounded reporting concerning the fall of Umm Qasr and Basra to Coalition troops, both were said to have been secured multiple times, often to be refuted later.³⁰² Some criticised this as government deception, yet a more likely explanation is the pressure to be the first to release breaking news in 24/7 news competition.³⁰³ The speed with which information is processed means it is often done so without considerable fact-checking, resulting in inaccuracies.³⁰⁴ Embedding was ideal for rolling news, its proximity to the frontline resulted in masses of information, while also appealing to the tendency of 24/7 news to 'go live' to events.³⁰⁵ This type of reporting sacrifices contextual discussion, as the spectacle of the immediacy overrides broader issues.³⁰⁶ Embedding meant media outlets were saturated with information leading to the de-

²⁹⁹ Sorenson, Erik quoted in Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, pp. 166/167

³⁰⁰ Sharkey, Jacqueline E, "The Television War" *American Journalism Review*, (May 2003)

³⁰¹ Laity, "Straddling the Divide - Spinning for Both Sides" p. 283

³⁰² Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 77-80

³⁰³ Ibid. p. 78

³⁰⁴ Lynch, "Reporting Iraq - what went right? what went wrong?" p. 119

³⁰⁵ Thussu, "Live TV and Bloodless Deaths" p. 120

³⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 120

prioritisation of strategic and political issues of the war. Furthermore, the media no longer had to look towards foreign media for stories to fill air time.³⁰⁷ Rampton and Stauber claim the result of this was that people knew *less* about conflict, a study conducted following the Gulf War revealed that the more TV news a person watched, the less likely they were to know about wider issues and the more likely they were to support the war.³⁰⁸

Fundamentally, embedding provided the material essential to the media's commercial and infotainment priorities. The result of this was a lack in contextual discussion, relegating wider issues about justification for war to the periphery. One important question for the conclusion is whether Coalition policy-makers predicted these outcomes and set to deliberately elicit them. Ideas regarding journalists identifying with troops have previously existed, especially following the Falkland and Gulf Wars.³⁰⁹ Brian Cullin, Director of Communication Planning and Integration, stated: "I knew that would come out of it, the whole Stockholm-syndrome type of thing."³¹⁰ However, this element seemed of secondary importance to providing a spectacle to distract the media. It should be stated that this appears to be a mostly American endeavour, with the reporting attracting criticism in Britain, for example Colonel Brook of the MoD's Media Operations stated: "The American approach was simply the provision of an ability to spectate. And they were completely satisfied with simply providing the spectacle."³¹¹

This statement suggests this element of the media management policy was not openly discussed in the Coalition. Indeed, British commanders instigated measures, such as the Forward Transmission Units, which hindered the saturation of news studios.³¹² It is possible that through the use of PR and media specialists the US gained an enlightened understanding

³⁰⁷ Moorcraft & Taylor, *Shooting the Messenger*, pp. 186/187

³⁰⁸ Rampton & Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception*, pp. 175/156

³⁰⁹ Carruthers, *The Media at War*, pp. 159/160

³¹⁰ Cullin, Brian quoted in Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 131

³¹¹ Interview with Brook, COL Paul in Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 41

³¹² Ibid. p. 67

of media commercialism and priorities. Embedding allowed for media outlets to engorge themselves on information which appealed to these priorities, simultaneously allowing the military to establish the prime narratives.

Strategic oversight was to be provided by briefings at the CENTCOM media centre in Qatar.³¹³ This initiative however, was met with frustration by journalists who felt it provided little information.³¹⁴ CENTCOM briefings are widely accused of failing to provide strategic oversight, leading networks to utilise embeds to fill vacant airtime.³¹⁵ There is evidence to suggest this was deliberately sought by the US, journalist Michael Massing claimed CENTCOM was designed to be “as annoying and inconvenient as possible for reporters”,³¹⁶ while Clarke accepts that CENTCOM was designed as secondary to embedding.³¹⁷ General Frank’s director of communications stated: “Qatar was never designed to be the font of all news; the font of all news was designed to be the front line and their embeds and it worked out. We couldn’t be happier.”³¹⁸ It seems the British were not included in this approach; they were also dissatisfied with CENTCOM. Media blackouts and US evasiveness to questions often bewildered MoD officers, with Colonel Brook stating the US “pretty much lost the war when it came to media support.”³¹⁹

Following operations in Iraq, journalists began calling for improved military briefing operations, a concept that was previously viewed with disdain. For example, journalist David Bartlett, after the Gulf War, proposed that “a well-briefed war is almost automatically a

³¹³ Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 65

³¹⁴ Ibid. p. 66

³¹⁵ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 41/42

³¹⁶ Massing, Michael quoted in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 66

³¹⁷ Interview with Clarke, Victoria in Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 44

³¹⁸ Interview with Wilkinson, James in Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 44

³¹⁹ Interview with Brook, COL Paul in Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 68

poorly reported war and vice versa.”³²⁰ Following Iraq, journalists began to re-evaluate the value of close access to units, with some advocating for a more detached overview.³²¹

Reporting the Jessica Lynch and Firdos Square Incidents

The issues which emerged from embedding will be examined in relation to two major events of the Iraq War: The rescue of Jessica Lynch and the toppling of the Firdos Square statue.

The rescue of Jessica Lynch has been particularly controversial and resulted in a House of Representatives investigation entitled ‘Misleading Information from the Battlefield: The Tillman and Lynch Episodes’.³²² Lynch, a US supply clerk, was taken prisoner on 23 March, and following her rescue on 1 April, received significant media attention. Despite initially accurate reports, later reports emerged stating she fought fiercely against the enemy. *The Washington Post* on 3 April reported Lynch:

“...fought fiercely and shot several enemy soldiers... firing her weapon until she ran out of ammunition, U.S. officials said yesterday. Lynch... continued firing at the Iraqis even after she sustained multiple gunshot wounds and watched several other soldiers in her unit die around her...”³²³

Other publications reported similarly,³²⁴ some claiming she was tortured by ‘Fedayeen’ after her capture.³²⁵

³²⁰ Interview with Bartlett, David in Baroody, *Media Access and the Military*, p. 171

³²¹ Lynch, “Reporting Iraq - what went right? what went wrong?” p. 123

³²² House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, “Misleading Information From the Battlefield: The Tillman and Lynch Episodes” <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-110hrpt858/html/CRPT-110hrpt858.htm> (accessed 25/8/2012)

³²³ Loeb, Vernon & Schmidt, Susan. ‘She was Fighting to the Death’; Details Emerging of W. Va. Soldier’s Capture and Rescue” *The Washington Post*, (3 April 2003)

³²⁴ Harindranath, Ramaswami, “Battling over the ‘truth’” in Biressi, Anita & Nunn, Heather, (ed.) *Mediaactive, issue 3: Mediawar*, (London: Barefoot Publications, 2003) pp. 34/35

³²⁵ Kumar, Deepa, “War Propaganda and the (Ab)Uses of Women: Media Constructions of the Jessica Lynch Story” *Feminist Media Studies*, Vol 4. No. 3, (2004) p. 301

Her rescue was filmed by a 'combat camera' crew and was similarly described as heroic.³²⁶

The supposed heroism of Lynch and her rescuers was soon developed into several documentaries and a TV movie developed in conjunction with the Pentagon.³²⁷

Later details emerged which contradicted the original statements from unnamed 'official sources'. Far from fighting 'fiercely' Lynch testified to the investigation that she was knocked unconscious immediately, sustaining only road accident injuries.³²⁸ The rescue was also stated to be overly dramatic, and arguably unnecessary. The hospital was later found to be abandoned of military personnel, furthermore, it emerged that Iraqi hospital staff had attempted to return Lynch to American lines, but were fired upon.³²⁹ This has led some to speculate that details of Lynch episode were fabricated to develop a positive story during a period of negative press. Casualties had been mounting, while a lack of WMD evidence and slow-downing of the invasion had led to speculation that it was becoming 'bogged-down'.³³⁰ Kumar concludes that: "In this context, the "daring" and "dramatic" rescue of Lynch, as the media would describe it, served to deflect attention from the difficulties and to win support for the war effort."³³¹ Harindranath claims that the dramatic nature of the episode appealed to "American psyche through its use of the Hollywood argot". A doctor at the hospital stated:

"It was like a Hollywood film. They cried "Go, go, go", with guns and blanks and the sound of explosions. They made a show - an action movie like Sylvester Stallone or Jackie Chan, with jumping and shouting, breaking open doors..."³³²

Chairman of the investigation, Henry Waxman stated US officials had become the source of a story which "riveted the nation, but twisted the truth beyond recognition".³³³ He stated that

³²⁶ House of Representatives, "Misleading Information From the Battlefield"

³²⁷ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc.*, p. 80

³²⁸ Lynch, Jessica quoted in WVPublicBroadcasting "Jessica Lynch testifies before House Committee, part 1 of 2" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SqpzJ3_fzo&feature=relmfu (accessed 28/8/2012)

³²⁹ Harindranath, "Battling over the 'truth'" p. 35

³³⁰ Kumar, "War Propaganda and the (Ab)Uses of Women" pp. 299/300

³³¹ Ibid. p. 300

³³² Harindranath, "Battling over the 'truth'" pp. 35/36

the rescue had, in fact, been delayed to make necessary filming and press preparations.³³⁴ The presentation of the rescue as non-fictional, as well as news and documentary reporting, made the fabricated version of events more resilient, as these mediums are assumed to be ‘mimetic’ of reality, as opposed to drama’s ‘diegetic’ nature.³³⁵ This combination with Hollywood themes makes the narrative even more attractive to audiences and media outlets.³³⁶ Lynch herself was a perfect subject for this narrative, as an attractive, blonde 19 year old; she could be framed as a ‘damsel-in-distress’ to be rescued by masculine heroes.³³⁷ Additionally, her rescue worked to frame the US as an enlightened nation compared to an Iraqi regime which abuses women.³³⁸

It is debatable whether the military manipulated the media to this conclusion, as Waxman stated; it is unclear whether the fabrications resulted from “incompetence or deliberate strategy.”³³⁹ US officials responsible for ‘dramatic’ reports stated they never knowingly gave false information. Admiral Thorpe stated he took information from the press, and “things that [he’d] heard” before relaying it to the media, with these reports then being attributed to officials.³⁴⁰ Misinformation may have resulted from persistent rumours, attributed to officials, which gained credibility through their pervasiveness. Thorpe stated that in the rapid nature of media environments, he was unable to accurately know the truth.³⁴¹ Moorcraft concludes along similar lines, stating the media “...were to blame for the initial hype, not the military, though they did little to counter the flag-waving around the saving of Private

³³³ Waxman, Henry quoted in WVPublicBroadcasting “Jessica Lynch testifies before House Committee, part 1 of 2”

³³⁴ WVPublicBroadcasting “Jessica Lynch testifies before House Committee, part 2 of 2”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyJI-WOWuRg&feature=relmfu> (accessed 28/8/2012)

³³⁵ Harindranath, “Battling over the ‘truth’” p. 38

³³⁶ Ibid. p. 40

³³⁷ Kumar, “War Propaganda and the (Ab)Uses of Women” p. 300

³³⁸ Ibid. p. 299

³³⁹ Waxman, Henry quoted in WVPublicBroadcasting “Jessica Lynch testifies before House Committee, part 1 of 2”

³⁴⁰ Thorpe, ADM Frank quoted in House of Representatives, “Misleading Information From the Battlefield”

³⁴¹ Ibid.

Lynch.”³⁴² Regardless, the information must have been produced by military sources, deliberately or mistakenly, as they held the monopoly on information in this instance, while the story was allowed to permeate through the media by officials who favoured ‘heroic’ interpretations. The ‘Hollywood’ rescue capitalised on this, with one CENTCOM officer claiming: “We knew it would be the hottest thing of the day, there was not an intent to talk it down or embellish it, because we didn’t need to. It was an awesome story.”³⁴³ Therefore, Lynch’s rescue contained similar themes as embedding, providing a dramatic, ‘quasi-live’, human interest war story. The US administration acted to prioritise ‘cinematic’ narratives, not controlling the media, but permitting it to report extensively.

The toppling of the Firdos Square Saddam Hussein statue is commonly defined as the most enduring image of the conflict. 80% of respondents interviewed by Brookes et al. remembered it “very well”.³⁴⁴ On 9 April, an apparent group of Iraqis attempted to topple the statue, their efforts were aided by US troops utilising a recovery vehicle to destroy the statue.³⁴⁵ The event arguably provided the Coalition’s ‘victory-moment’, despite the continuation of combat operations.³⁴⁶ However, journalist Robert Fisk claims it was “...the most staged photo-opportunity since Iwo Jima.”³⁴⁷ Indeed, Firdos Square was located outside the base for many journalists.³⁴⁸

Media organisations immediately framed the footage as significant; describing it as ‘momentous’, ‘overwhelming’, and ‘ecstatic’.³⁴⁹ It was increasingly framed relative to

³⁴² Moorcraft & Taylor, *Shooting the Messenger*, p. 200

³⁴³ Robinson, LT-COL John quoted in WVPublicBroadcasting “Jessica Lynch testifies before House Committee, part 2 of 2”

³⁴⁴ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 14/148

³⁴⁵ Aday, Sean, Cluverius, John & Livingston, Steven, “As Goes the Statue, So Goes the War: The Emergence of the Victory Frame in Television Coverage of the Iraq War” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, Vol. 49, Iss. 3, (2005) p. 321

³⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 314

³⁴⁷ Fisk, Robert quoted in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 110

³⁴⁸ Aday, et al., “As Goes the Statue, So Goes the War” p. 314/315

³⁴⁹ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 148

historically significant televised events, namely the fall of the Berlin Wall.³⁵⁰ Aday et al. claim that historical analogies are commonplace, stating that “canonical images” reflect a need for “symbolic catharsis” with powerful news images “evok[ing] primary cultural themes”.³⁵¹ They claim such images are often synthetic in nature, and prioritise drama.³⁵² Further to providing a ‘victory moment’ and the physical manifestation of the defeat of the enemy, it also provided a ‘liberation moment’, and helped to confirm Coalition claims that Iraqis clamoured for freedom. This claim was often made with historical analogies; *The Daily Telegraph* reported: “This joyous moment calls the deposition of scores of statues of Lenin all over eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War.”³⁵³ Outlets noted scenes of “jubilant Iraqis”, “crowds cheering” and “greeting [US troops] as liberators”.³⁵⁴

The pervasiveness of these frames is illustrated by the fact that following the event journalists began returning home.³⁵⁵ The number of stories regarding the war similarly dropped as shown in Figure 3:

³⁵⁰ Aday, et al., “As Goes the Statue, So Goes the War” p. 316

³⁵¹ Ibid. p. 317

³⁵² Ibid. p. 316/317

³⁵³ The Daily Telegraph “A day of joy for Iraq, a day of reckoning for tyrants” *The Daily Telegraph, Telegraph View*, (10 April 2003) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/3589892/A-day-of-joy-for-Iraq-a-day-of-reckoning-for-tyrants.html> (accessed 22/8/2012)

³⁵⁴ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 151/152

³⁵⁵ Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, “The Vanishing Embedded Reporter in Iraq”

Figure 3
Comparing War Coverage on FNC and CNN the Week Before
and the Week After April 9th

	FNC	CNN
Total war stories		
7 days before April 9th	44	61
7 days after April 9th	13	45
Total war stories with battle or strategy/tactics as main topic		
7 days before April 9th	28	36
7 days after April 9th	6	7
Total war stories with battle or strategy/tactics as subtopic		
7 days before April 9th	48	36
7 days after April 9th	9	4
Total war stories with combat visuals		
7 days before April 9th	33	41
7 day after April 9th	8	11

Note: FNC = Fox News Channel; CNN = Cable News Network
 Reproduced from Aday, et al. "As Goes the Statue, So Goes the War" p. 326

Moorcraft and Taylor claim, the collapse of the statue provided the media with their ‘exit strategy’, which became important as embedding increased in expense.³⁵⁶ As such, there was less media presence in post-conflict stages, where Coalition casualties were in fact higher.³⁵⁷

Several journalists have stated that the reality of the event was different from that shown, with the crowd being relatively small and the event garnering only minor local attention.³⁵⁸

Kellner states that much of the crowd was journalists or members of the INC which had been previously flown into Baghdad.³⁵⁹ Evidence emerged that the event, although started by Iraqis, was seized upon by PSYOP officers. Staff Sergeant Plesich recalled that a colonel “saw the Saddam statue as a target of opportunity and decided that the statue must come down”, adding:

“We looked over and now there was an American flag draped over the face of the statue. God bless them, but we were thinking from PSYOP school that this was just bad news. We didn’t

³⁵⁶ Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 196

³⁵⁷ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, pp. 183/184

³⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 103

³⁵⁹ Kellner, “9/11, Spectacles of Terror, and Media Manipulation”, p. 153

want to look like an occupation force, and some of the Iraqis were saying, 'No, we want an Iraqi flag!' So I said 'No problem, somebody get me an Iraqi flag.' I am not sure where it came from, but one of the Iraqis brought us the old Iraqi flag... We got that as fast as we could and started running that up to the statue."³⁶⁰

For Miller this highlighted that PSYOP officers "spend at least some of their time managing... domestic opinion".³⁶¹ Global Focus.org similarly states: "It would be impossible to claim that the staged toppling of Saddam's statue was not intended for international audiences, including the US."³⁶² Therefore, the incident provides evidence that PSYOP has targeted US audiences; however this event may be exceptional. Plesich's statement appears to prioritise the opinion of Iraqis, not global or domestic opinion, furthermore, he belonged to a Tactical Psychological Operations Team, a unit designed for military PSYOP, not strategic media-management; therefore their actions may have been spontaneous.

Indeed, the media were responsible for the presentation of the event, not the military or administration. Media organisations elected to make analogies with historical events, prioritising tight, close-shots, which made the crowds look larger, as opposed to wide-shots which illustrated the emptiness of the square. Wide-shots were not used in any British evening news reports. Brookes et al. concludes: "In short, images were chosen for their drama rather than their accuracy."³⁶³ Editorial control is important in this regard, as they appeared to highlight images of celebratory Iraqis, Brookes et al. claims such images constituted 'goal' pictures and illustrates how "journalistic judgement contains clear ideological assumptions".³⁶⁴ However, the media could have been responding to government claims that

³⁶⁰ Interview with Plesich, S/SGT Brian conducted by Cahill, LTCOL Dennis quoted in Global Security, "On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom"
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2004/onpoint/ch-6.htm> (accessed 15/6/2012)

³⁶¹ Miller, "The Propaganda Machine" p. 95

³⁶² Global Focus, "Information Operations & Psychological Operations in Iraq"

³⁶³ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 150

³⁶⁴ Ibid. pp. 103/104

Coalition troops would be met as liberators. Administration officials prepared the press for ‘liberation scenes’, when these appeared to materialise, the media were already predisposed to follow government claims.³⁶⁵

This incident highlights the trend for the modern media to seek spectacles - the toppling of the statue appeared to provide an almost filmic ending to the war, a moment of jubilation, complete with symbolic destruction of the enemy. Therefore, it fits into the narrative produced by other elements of Coalition media policy.

³⁶⁵ Aday, et al., “As Goes the Statue, So Goes the War” p. 318

Chapter 3: The Implications of Military Media-Management

“We expect every American to support our military, and if they can’t do that, to shut up.” -

Bill O’Reilly, Fox News Channel³⁶⁶

The Legitimacy of Western Propaganda Use

The above illustrates how the military utilised the media to benefit IO and PSYOP capabilities. They developed a programme which distracted media outlets away from meta-analysis of the war, while reducing their dependency on foreign information sources. Embedding was prioritised by a media moving towards infotainment, especially in the US. The Coalition gained information dominance and protected the COG of public opinion by enthralling the media with spectacles. The military rarely lied, instead presenting alternative ‘truths’, while repressing others. During the Lynch episode, they allowed ‘heroic’ versions to dominate, despite the presence of alternative ‘truths’, the same can be seen in a Baghdad market bombing on 29 March. Fisk identified wreckage which he claimed stated a US missile was responsible, the Coalition stated the explosion *could* have resulted from a malfunctioning Iraqi surface-to-air missile.³⁶⁷ Whatever the actual truth, the Coalition prioritised a ‘potential truth’, which a media, conditioned by government claims regarding Iraqi inferiority and Coalition precision, may have more readily reported. However, the use of ‘spin’ in this way, at least constitutes manipulation, and potentially propaganda.

Therefore should propaganda, or media/information manipulation, be a legitimate strategic tool for democracies? Such terms garner negativity in the West; they are seen as incompatible with open democracy, and are associated with authoritarian regimes.³⁶⁸ Schmidt, however,

³⁶⁶ O’Reilly, Bill quoted in Lowery & Pilger, *The War You Don’t See*

³⁶⁷ Fisk, Robert summarised in Bodi, Faisal, “Al Jazeera’s War” in Miller, David (ed.) *Tell me lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004) p. 247

³⁶⁸ Gough, LTC Susan L. “The Evolution of Strategic Influence” p. 2

states such activities are not vastly different from political or marketing campaigns, arguing: “If the Republican and Democratic National Committees, Coca-Cola, Nike, and McDonald’s can do it, why can’t our government use the same successful methods to target many of the same audiences?”³⁶⁹

The increasing role of information warfare makes this particularly critical; especially as media support is not guaranteed in asymmetric ‘New Wars’.³⁷⁰ Therefore, some commanders have advocated for domestic propaganda use, if it wins wars. Admiral Lewin, following the Falklands War, stated:

“I do not see it as deceiving the press or the public: I see it as deceiving the enemy. What I am trying to do is win. Anything I can do to help me win is fair as far as I am concerned.”³⁷¹

Taylor argues that ‘propaganda’ is a value-neutral term, claiming such techniques could be used for good: “If the intention is to promote democratic values... then democracies need not fight shy from the word.”³⁷² For example, if the West conducted more robust information campaigns against public opinion in 1994, they may have secured an intervention during the Rwandan Genocide.

In modern conflicts, not utilising propaganda may disadvantage the West. Modern communication and media environments can allow poorly equipped enemies to have strategic influence.³⁷³ Gough states the real surprise is that the West’s enemies are effective, given the West’s expertise in psychology and communications.³⁷⁴ Martemucci claims that in ‘Long War’ these factors favour the enemy; therefore, by not utilising PSYOP or IO domestically,

³⁶⁹ Schmidt, MAJ. “The Global Information Environment & 21st Century Warfare” p. 15

³⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 14

³⁷¹ Lewin, ADM Terence quoted in Jesser, & Young, *The Media and the Military*, p. 115

³⁷² Taylor, Phillip M. “Perception Management and the ‘War’ Against Terrorism.” *Journal of Information Warfare* 1, no. 3 (May 2002) p. 28

³⁷³ Ibid. pp. 15/16

³⁷⁴ Gough, LTC Susan L. “The Evolution of Strategic Influence” p. 33

the West may be hindering its ability to combat 21st century adversaries.³⁷⁵ Clausewitz stated that moderation in warfare would “lead to logical absurdity”, advocating the expenditure of maximum effort by combining ‘total means’ and ‘strength of will’.³⁷⁶ Martemucci argues that post-9/11 conflicts are ‘wars of ideas’ and it is therefore “imperative that the “National Will” be effectively communicated to all audiences through a cohesive Perception Management campaign.”³⁷⁷ Not to do so results in Clausewitz’s absurdity. Stahl argues this dynamic results in citizens no longer being the subject of the military, as in the citizen-soldier, but the *object* of military interest - constituting a ‘battle space’ to be ‘micro-managed.’³⁷⁸ Strict adherence to democratic principles could be disadvantageous in conflicts, furthermore, an unchecked media could prolong warfare, Lord explains the media accepts it cannot endanger lives but “they do not recognise an obligation to refrain from publicising information that demoralises American troops, reveals aspects of American intelligence or military planning, undermines American diplomatic initiatives, or gives psychological comfort to the enemy.”³⁷⁹ Such reporting reduces military efficiency, increasing casualties and conflict duration.

The media often see themselves as guardians of democratic principles. In interviews by Baroody, several journalists expressed the watchdog role of the press, in “auditing what is going on in the battlefield”, and exposing deception.³⁸⁰ War correspondents in particular, are more demanding when it comes to professional autonomy, while the ‘truth’ is often more critical in their work, than in other journalistic areas.³⁸¹

³⁷⁵ Martemucci, MAJ. “Regaining the High Ground” p. 17

³⁷⁶ Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 76/77

³⁷⁷ Martemucci, MAJ. “Regaining the High Ground” p. 23

³⁷⁸ Stahl, *Militainment, Inc.*, p. 38

³⁷⁹ Lord, Carnes “The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy” p. 24

³⁸⁰ Baroody, *Media Access and the Military*, p. 143

³⁸¹ Prentoulis and Tumber, “Journalists Under Fire” pp. 215-218

However, does the public appreciate these values, or are they more willing to suspend these concepts during conflict? Broadcasters have claimed that the fallout from Vietnam identifies that the public similarly value their 'right to know'.³⁸² However, there is evidence to suggest that the public may tolerate reducing this right, even in limited conflicts. Following the Falklands War a Defence Committee concluded:

“Many principles, supposedly regarded as sacred and absolute within the media, are applied in a less rigid and categorical way by the public... In our judgement the public is, in general, quite ready to tolerate being misled to some extent if the enemy is also misled, thereby contributing to the success of the campaign.”³⁸³

Following the Falklands War, Morris and Tumber conducted audience research regarding their attitudes towards war reporting. Although concluding the 'public did not wish for the "fourth estate" to become the "fourth service"' - with three-quarters of respondents favouring 'reporting information even though it might reflect unfavourably on British troops' - they also found areas of divergence. 49% thought such information should be reported after the war, with only 26% advocating for immediate publication. 34% approved of government public misinformation to aid the war effort, with 21% stating the media should facilitate this.³⁸⁴ Similar findings were gathered following the Gulf War; although 57% believed reporting should be objective, 27% thought it should emphasise a 'British interpretation'.³⁸⁵ These numbers, although the minority, are still significant, illustrating sections of the public will accept the temporary cessation of 'democratic' reporting in war. These results, however, could be related to the high levels of support in the Falkland and Gulf Wars.³⁸⁶ The Iraq War was much more controversial, especially in Britain, and viewers were less willing to accept

³⁸² Carruthers, *The Media at War*, p. 153

³⁸³ Ibid. p. 154

³⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 154/155

³⁸⁵ Morrison, *Television and the Gulf War*, p. 10

³⁸⁶ Carruthers, *The Media at War*, p. 155

biased reporting. Surveys showed that 92% favoured impartial reporting, a number significantly higher than in previous conflicts.³⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the success of Fox in America perhaps illustrates that certain sectors of the US audience were less inclined towards unbiased reporting.³⁸⁸

The above suggests that audiences may tolerate government deception, and biased reporting, if it aids the effort for popular wars. This tolerance quickly erodes if the war is perceived as controversial or unjustified. Clausewitz recognised this, stating the maximum effort should be pursued within the confines set by policy, which in democracies represents public will. Clausewitz continued: “To turn this principle into practise [the commander] must renounce the need for absolute success in each given case...”³⁸⁹ Therefore, media-management is possible in circumstances where the national will is strong enough to support such ‘maximum efforts’, for example in total or popular wars, such as the Iraq War (in the US). However, once the national will, or public passion, contracts, as it did during the post-conflict stages, toleration for this ‘maximum expenditure’ wanes. This explains recent controversy surrounding military media-management which has emerged

Conclusion

The above suggests the media were not forcibly co-opted into IO or PSYOP. Nevertheless, despite little evidence of censorship, the media were still utilised for these functions. However, the nature of the manipulation had changed greatly - far from the media being a victim, they actually became complicit within manipulation. Essentially, the media-management policy of the Iraq War allowed the media to ‘manipulate’ itself.

³⁸⁷ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 165

³⁸⁸ Hoskins, *Televising War*, pp. 66/67

³⁸⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 585

The use of PR firms within the military is critically important. These organisations, adept at operating in modern media environments, acted to dominate media coverage of the Iraq War.³⁹⁰ PR corporations helped promote a new attitude towards the media, which emphasised *allowing* and not restricting access. PR specialist, Kate Paine, claimed embedding constituted a tactic of “sheer genius”, calling it “a brilliant strategy and could well change the face of PR forever”.³⁹¹ A central component was that the military learnt to appreciate reporters as humans, she states: “The lesson here is... treat reporters as human beings, train them, give them access, let them develop the relationships - and chances are good you’ll get your message across.”³⁹² Instead of the military viewing the media as a homogenous and adversarial entity, they increasingly appreciated it as a diverse and malleable network, comprised of humans with which relationships could develop.

However, the ‘relationship’ element appears to be secondary to concepts of distracting the media with exciting information. Once again this originates in a skilful modern media examination. Following interviews with Pentagon staff, Brookes et al. concluded it was “clear that the military and the government understands very well how the media works...”³⁹³ Central figures, such as Alastair Campbell, were previously journalists and, therefore, have intimate knowledge of media practises.³⁹⁴ Campbell has been accused of using his experience to manipulate journalists, to the extent that ‘politics in Britain has become ‘packaged’ for the media’.³⁹⁵ Such practises were conducted so skilfully that it may have operated on subconscious levels. War-correspondent Chris Hedges concludes: “Perhaps this is not conscious. I doubt the journalists filing the hollow reports from Iraq, in which there are

³⁹⁰ Miller et al. “War is Sell” p. 44

³⁹¹ Paine, Kate quoted in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 59

³⁹² Ibid. p. 59

³⁹³ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 195

³⁹⁴ Campbell, *Information Age Journalism*, p. 82

³⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 91

images but rarely any content, are aware of how they are being manipulated.”³⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the US appears largely responsible for this, with British officers criticising the coverage.

Brook recognises that embed reports were just “...too good. If you’re an editor and you’ve got the choice of running a gun battle in Al Nasiriya and a chap doing a briefing in Qatar, there is no contest, and that was extremely frustrating.”³⁹⁷ Britain never enjoyed as high support levels for the war as the Americans. In America, the administration may have been content to distract audiences from the strategic issues of the war, in Britain these issues were more persistent - embedding did not address this issue.

Taverner claims the military understood the media would be present at future conflicts and they were therefore “a factor that has to be considered in all military planning.”³⁹⁸ He concludes the military recognised that “the media, like nature, abhors a vacuum.”³⁹⁹

Information restriction in the modern media environment did not prevent negative reporting; instead the media could go elsewhere for information. By providing timely information the military can maintain dominance by ensuring *their* messages filled the vacuum. To retain restrictive policies would hand the initiative to other, possibly adversarial, sources. By engaging the media they would be most responsive to administration narratives. Brookes et al. claim this has less to do with “*preventing negative coverage than creating positive coverage*.”⁴⁰⁰ This dynamic provides a robust information strategy which can protect critical COGs.

Embedding plays a critical role as it provided the most exciting information, developing the military advance as the dominant narrative. The Pentagon’s enthusiasm for the program

³⁹⁶ Hedges, Chris quoted in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 61

³⁹⁷ Interview with Brook, COL Paul in Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 76

³⁹⁸ Taverner, LT COL, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century” p. 271

³⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 272

⁴⁰⁰ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 195

illustrates that they favoured such narratives.⁴⁰¹ Military success was the least controversial issue prior to the conflict, most analysts expected the Coalition to be victorious. As a result, coverage of this issue would overlook more controversial subjects, such as Iraqi possession of WMDs and civilians' welfare.⁴⁰² Furthermore, the programme provided credibility by supporting military claims. General Myers statement during the war is fairly typical: "As you've seen from the TV coverage, from embedded media, clearly we're moving towards our objectives."⁴⁰³

The Coalition provided the bait which lured the media into areas where positive messages predominated. As Paine stated, embedding was an "offer the media couldn't resist".⁴⁰⁴ Miller claims, it essentially made journalists "become advocates for the system of control".⁴⁰⁵ Therefore, the military bear some responsibility for manipulating the media. Although there were instances of PSYOP in domestic reporting, the Coalition's policy was primarily driven by a public relations agenda, not an attempt to instigate formal domestic PSYOP. The media, attracted by promises of access were complicit within this.⁴⁰⁶

The media must also assume some responsibility for this manipulation, especially for so eagerly taking the 'bait'. Embedding was only successful *because the media had already been adopting practises which precluded critical interpretation in favour of cheap news concerned with celebrity and action*. As war-correspondent Martin Bell stated:

"We like to see ourselves as bulwarks or beacons, standing in a principled way against censorship, manipulation and a variety of political pressures to shade the truth. Those are our enemies. But is it not possible that the real enemy lies in the hearts of journalists

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. p. 154

⁴⁰² Ibid. pp. 190/191

⁴⁰³ Myers, GEN Richard quoted in Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 157

⁴⁰⁴ Paine, Kate quoted in Palmer & Tumber, *Media at War*, p. 59

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 92

⁴⁰⁶ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 191

themselves, in cynicism and unchecked ambition and a willingness to fool with the facts for the sake of a story?”⁴⁰⁷

Brookes et al. conclude similarly, stating that the military’s program was successful “not because of any *failure* of normal media practises, but precisely because *professional journalists were carrying on with business as usual*.”⁴⁰⁸

The military utilised the media through a detailed and enlightened examination of modern media practises. These examinations revealed media tendencies which were more easily manipulated, not through the information restriction, but through information *saturation*. The competitiveness of news networks, combined with an audience who are perceived as appreciating spectacle over education, resulted in a programme which provided the media with what they *wanted* to win audience share, at an expense of what they *needed* to inform audiences.

However, can we expect the military to do anything else? They have the imperative to win at the lowest cost possible. In modern warfare, this requires engagement within the informational sphere. The media and negative public opinion can be seen as adversarial to strategy. As with any adversary, the military will desire to conquer it - this is the essence of strategy - the production of an asymmetry in your advantage,⁴⁰⁹ as one American colonel stated: “...part of our planning process was: how could we maximise the use of that press?”⁴¹⁰

During the Iraq War, this domination was achieved through *proactive* interaction with the media.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ Bell, Martin quoted in Laity, “Straddling the Divide - Spinning for Both Sides” p. 289

⁴⁰⁸ Brookes et al. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later*, p. 197

⁴⁰⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 75

⁴¹⁰ Rid, *War and Media Operations*, p. 170

⁴¹¹ Taverner, LT COL, “Learning the Lessons of the 20th Century” p. 269

This nature of strategy appears to have been misunderstood by many in the media. The fact most of the criticism for embedding resulted from veteran war-correspondents highlights the naivety of modern media practitioners in dealing with the military. Any military-media policy will always ‘weaponise’ the media, not to do so results in Clausewitz’s ‘absurdity’.

However, wars, in a democratic society, are fought at the behest of the public as such their opinion must be a component of strategy, not merely as ‘friction’ but as the central feature of politics. Utilising the media in IO will only be effective in conflicts where the political and national will is strong enough to support such actions, i.e. in popular wars. Wars are *made* popular through government justification and reasoning; this popularity is *maintained* by military activities in war. This highlights an intimate link between the three branches of Clausewitz’s trinity. The role of the government in providing the basis for IO in Iraq must be stressed. The media-management policy of the military could only be successful because the preceding government campaign for justifying the war had seemingly, in the US, answered broader issues concerning the war. The less potent success of British media-management may be associated to lower support levels and lingering public doubts regarding justification.

Clausewitz provides that ‘enmity’ is central to successful strategy.⁴¹² Indeed, he states “combat is an expression of hostile feelings”, this hatred, however, is not just required from combatants, but also from public will.⁴¹³ In post-industrial war such hatred is short-coming. In these situations ‘war spectacles’ will not benefit information strategy since it would simply appear as ‘slaughter for slaughter’s sake’. For this dynamic to benefit strategy the spectating must be conducted within ‘hatred’ frameworks. It could be claimed that this ‘hatred’ was generated prior to the Iraq War through claims of Iraqi WMD possession and association with 9/11. This generated the ‘enmity’ required, in the US, for successful IO operations, by providing context to the spectating of war. The nature of the spectating, in turn, prevented

⁴¹² Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 89

⁴¹³ Ibid. p. 137/138

these broader contexts from being re-examined by the public, therefore, preserving ‘hatred’ and protecting the Coalitions’ critical centre of gravity.

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